TRAITS OF NATURE,

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BY

MISS BURNEY,

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AUTHOR OF

CLARENTINE, GERALDINE FAUCONBERG, &c.

SECOND EDITION.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

S'il y a un amour pur et exempt du mélange de nos autres passions, c'est celui qui est caché au fond du cœur, et que nous ignorons nous-mêmes.——DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

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CHAPTER I.

BLUNDERING.

Adela, as soon as she had parted from her sister, repaired to the invalid's chamber, determined, since a scheme so repugnant to her could not be avoided, to give it all the respectability in her power by rendering herself truly useful. In addition to Lady Isabella's maid, who attended the child with great humanity, she found in the apartment a young woman, who, as assistant to the disgraced nurse, had travelled up to town with him, and was now importunate in her enquiries after her principal, without whose authority she seemed fearful of even approaching him.

"Speak softly," whispered Adela, "Lord Ossely must not be startled. The woman you ask after has left the house—I trust, never to re-enter it?"

The girl stared, and looked as if she scarcely dared credit an assertion which yet, it was evident, if true, would give her any thing rather than sorrow.

"Make no enquiries at present," resumed Adela, in the same guarded tone, "but do your best to assist in getting this poor little creature put to bed as quietly as possible."

No time was lost in complying with this injunction, and before Lady Isabella came up, every thing in her nephew's apartment was already comfortably arranged. Adela was sitting by the side of his bed, and the nursery-maid had resumed her work near the half-darkened window.

"How is he?" softly enquired Lady Isabella.

"There is no perceptible difference," answered Adela; "he has never spoken or stirred."

Her ladyship heard this without surprise, though not without concern. She complimented Adela on the admirable order which, in so short a time, she had established in the apartment: and then added—

"But I must leave you again, my dear

Miss Cleveland, as Mr. Annesley is just come in to dress for a dinner engagement, and I wish to go and communicate to him the events of the morning. See, however," continued she, pointing to the nurse of the little Somervilles, who just then entered, "see whom your considerate sister has sent to our help. I shall not now allow you to consider yourself as poor Algernon's sole property; you must be mine and my brother's during dinner. The child will be in such excellent hands, that I think we may both venture to leave him without the smallest scruple."

"Certainly we may," replied Adela; "and I have no ambition to perform any acts of supererogation."

"But do not think it one, to stay here this evening! I can give you no idea how it strengthens my courage to recollect that you are in the house!"

"And why so, Lady Isabella? Can you imagine me less inexperienced than yourself in a case of this kind?"

"No; but I not only imagine, I am certain, that you have a great deal more firmness and presence of mind."

She then left the room, telling her, that to prevent any disturbance to their patient, she would come up herself to call her when dinner was nearly ready.

Accordingly, in about half an hour, she re-appeared, and Adela went down to the drawing-room with her.

Lord Ennerdale started from a sofa on which he was reclining as they entered, and hastily approaching them,—

"How infinitely is my sister indebted to you," said he to Adela, "for this generous sacrifice of your time to her solace and support! I know you were not very easily induced to make it, but be assured, that you never performed a deed of greater charity and benevolence. Her spirits would not have borne her through the trial to which she is exposed, had she been left to endure it wholly by herself."

"But to *my* sister, Lord Ennerdale," said Adela, earnest to avert the conversation from herself, "how far greater are *your* obligations!—Has she not been an invaluable—an inexpressible blessing in this house to-day?"

"She has indeed rescued me from a state

of blindness, the most criminal, and, as it may yet prove, the most fatal into which a father could have fallen!"

"Oh, you have perverted my meaning! I intended to draw forth an eulogium of Mrs. Somerville—not a condemnation of yourself!"

"Mrs. Somerville is an angel! Yet I must ever associate with the remembrance of her good offices—of her inestimable kindness, and providential penetration, the bitter recollection of my own unjustifiable delusion!"

"I will allow of no such associations," cried Adela, seeking to revive him; "my sister's praises, whilst I remain in this house, shall be so ceaselessly reverberated in your ear, that before you have time to summon up a self-accusing thought to accompany *one* speech in her favour, another shall follow it—and then another—and then another—leaving you no possibility of dwelling upon any thing but what is pleasant, and—like herself,—good."

"How fondly you love this charming sister!"

"I do indeed!—But there is no merit in

it, for she is every thing to me, and we all love those on whom our happiness principally depends."

"You have yet another sister, Miss Cleveland, have you not?" enquired Lady Isabella.

"Yes," answered Adela; "she has for the last year or two chiefly resided in Wales, but we expect her in town this spring. She is a great beauty—younger than Mrs. Somerville, and already, poor thing, a widow."

"Has she any family?"

"No; she lost her only little girl about a twelvemonth ago."

Mr. Annesley now came into the room to speak to Lord Ennerdale before he set out for the place where he was to dine. Adela and he were introduced to each other, and he thanked her with great politeness for granting to his wife the seasonable relief of her company.

"Miss Cleveland," said Lady Isabella, "is not only an inestimable comfort to me, and a most admirable manager in poor Algernon's sick room, but she seems of a very cheerful disposition, and will re-animate us all."

"It is a great mortification to me," cried Mr. Annesley, "to be obliged to forsake such society; and, my dear Isabella, I am sorry to remind you that *you* must forsake it also, during at least a part of the evening."

"Oh, Mr. Annesley, cannot you make an apology for me to your aunt?"

"I *can* make it—but she certainly will not accept it! Remember how seldom she gives an assembly, and how tenacious she is of old-fashioned punctilio. You must not disappoint her, indeed; for this *confusion* of hers, as she calls it, is chiefly intended as a compliment to you. However, you need not stay above an hour:—I will call for you, and we will go and return together."

Lady Isabella, with the best grace she was able, consented to this arrangement, and soon after, Mr. Annesley departed.

Adela had been pleased with his appearance and address; the one was youthful and elegant, and the other perfectly well bred.

When dinner was announced, and the friendly trio descended to the parlour, Lady Isabella said—

"There is something, my dear Miss Cleveland, in your countenance and manners, which, at times, entirely drives from me the recollection that no longer ago than four o'clock this very day, we were utter strangers to each other. How has this happened? I have had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Somerville once or twice this season: are you only just come to town?"

"On the contrary," said Adela, "I have been longer in town than either your Ladyship or my sister; but neither before she came, nor since, have I been anxious to pay morning visits at houses where I had not the honour of being acquainted: and, to own the truth, it was a mere matter of chance my being with her when she decided on coming here to-day."

"Never again, however, let Lady Isabella be indebted to chance," said Lord Ennerdale, "for the pleasure of receiving you. She will forgive, this once, both the fact and its confession: but I much doubt whether you will find her easy to appease on a repetition of the offence."

Adela was glad to observe in him this gleam of returning cheerfulness: but it was

of no permanence; the greatest part of the time they remained at table, he was evidently extremely depressed, and could only by an effort which he thought it ungrateful not to make, exert himself occasionally to join in the conversation.

When Lady Isabella retired to dress for her unwelcome engagement, Adela returned to the sick-room, and heard with sorrow, that the child continued exactly in the same torpid state as when she left him. She opened his curtain for a moment, and gazed at him with compassionate apprehension; then slowly retreating, she seated herself near a distant candle with a book lent to her by Lady Isabella—the first and incomparable volume of Miss Edgworth's "Fashionable Tales."

Before she went down, Lady Isabella stepped into the nursery to take leave of Adela, and also to snatch a look at her nephew.

"How fixed—how fearfully fixed is his countenance!" whispered she; "and yet his lips and cheeks have more colour than when I saw him last. Sweet boy! May he speedily be restored to his father's wishes!"

"Heaven grant it!" ejaculated Adela—

At that moment, the room door was gently opened, and Lord Ennerdale himself appeared—

"I am the bearer," said he, "of a message to you both. Mr. Somerville is below, Miss Cleveland, and wishes to see you; and Annesley is arrived, Isabella, and waiting to accompany you to your aunt's."—

He then approached the little boy's bed; contemplated him some time with an aspect of deep concern, and sighing heavily, turned silently away, and followed the two ladies down stairs.

Lady Isabella was well acquainted with Mr. Somerville, and shaking hands with him as she entered the drawing room— "Do not," said she, "form any harsh conclusions about me, from seeing me dressed and going out. I am under orders, you know; and Mr. Annesley makes a point of my appearing at a dull party given by his old relation, Lady Sarah Farnham."—

"But from so submissive a wife," said Mr. Annesley, "Somerville would scarcely have expected to hear these gracious repinings! My dear Isabella, can you ima-

gine, that if I knew of any feasible method of exempting either you or myself from fulfilling this disagreeable engagement, I would not most gladly embrace it?"

Lady Isabella was a little startled by the serious tone in which the latter part of this speech was uttered, and colouring, but not with anger,—"I have deserved," said she, "a little reproof, but hardly quite so grave a one! Come, let us go; you have admonished me into perfect humility."

Mr. Annesley looked sorry for the momentary earnestness into which he had been betrayed.

"Take my arm," cried he, "and let us, as you say, be gone, for I dread to look at Miss Cleveland after allowing her to hear this specimen of my conjugal oratory!"

He was then leading his wife away, when stopped by hearing Mr. Somerville exclaim,—

"Why, Adela, how is this! Have you quite given up the masquerade at Mrs. Ormsby's?"

"I have never even thought of it since the morning."

"The masquerade?" repeated Lady Isa-

bella.—"Had you intended going to it, Miss Cleveland?"

"Indeed, had she," answered her brother-in-law, "for there is her dress come home, which my little girls brought me down a minute account of after dinner. It is really a pity you should not go, my dear girl."

"It is indeed," resumed Lady Isabella, "and I cannot bear to be instrumental to your so doing. Let us set you down at your sister's, dear Miss Cleveland; and there you can dress and wait for your party. Whom were you going with?"

"With Mrs. Ross, and two of her nieces. But I can assure you, Lady Isabella, that I have not now the smallest inclination to go. I am very sorry that Mr. Somerville ever mentioned it."

"There's a girl for you!" exultingly cried that impolitic gentleman, "ready to give up a masquerade—the first she ever had an opportunity of attending—for the charitable purpose of nursing the sick, and comforting the afflicted! Upon my honour, Lord Ennerdale, you ought to throw yourself at her feet and worship her!"

The whole party seemed confounded, and Lord Ennerdale by no means the least so. He turned aside to examine some ornaments upon the chimney; Mr. Annesley vainly sought to suppress a smile; Lady Isabella appeared good-naturedly vexed at Adela's manifest embarrassment—and poor Adela herself, with cheeks of the deepest scarlet, forced an unwilling laugh, and hesitatingly said—

"You have enumerated so many inducements, Mr. Somerville, that—I think—I believe—I will go!"

Mr. Somerville now appeared desirous to draw back—

"Oh, but don't go at my instigation," cried he; "Elinor can make your excuses to Mrs. Ross when she calls, and I am sure we both had rather, ten thousand times, that you should remain here."

Adela was too angry to answer him, but drawing on the pelisse which she had worn in the morning, and turning with subdued agitation to Lord Ennerdale,

"Good night, my lord," said she; "I most sincerely wish that we may hear a bet-

ter account of your poor little boy in the morning."

"You return hither after the masquerade, I hope?" cried he, with quickness.

"No;" replied she, "it would occasion a disturbance in the house that might startle the invalid."

"It is impossible he should hear you," cried Lady Isabella; "the knocker is tied up, and the sound of the bell cannot reach to his chamber. My dear Miss Cleveland, *do* come back—I entreat that you will."

"We will settle this point in our way to Cumberland Place," said Adela; "I have detained your ladyship and Mr. Annesley too long already."

Lord Ennerdale bowed to her, but without speaking, and Mr. Somerville, as he took care of her down stairs, reproached himself severely for having tempted her to give up her meritorious post. She heard him in silence; he put her into the carriage, and Mr. Annesley ordered it to be driven to Cumberland Place.

During their short ride, Lady Isabella pressed her so earnestly to resume her intention of sleeping in Portman Square, that

Adela, although she had nearly made a secret vow never to re-enter the house, was ashamed of resisting such urgency, and gave the promise that was solicited.

When she had alighted at her sister's, and Lady Isabella and Mr. Annesley drove on, that gentleman laughingly exclaimed—

"Poor Miss Cleveland!—She would make a very clever general, if she had not so clumsy an aide-de-camp!"

"What can you possibly mean?"

"Why, do you not clearly perceive that Somerville, and perhaps his wife, and the whole host of the Clevelands, aim at securing for her the conquest of the handsome widower? And if they would let her spread her nets without interfering, there might be some chance of her succeeding, for she possesses beauty of the most winning description—beauty proceeding from countenance, from intelligence of character, from an appearance of the greatest frankness, and the most tranquil and undesigning simplicity. But that unlucky and over-eager fellow, Somerville, will spoil all. He will set your brother upon his guard against a take-in, and frighten even the poor

girl herself from prosecuting her allotted task."

"Is it credible that what has so wholly appeared to me the result of pure benevolence—their permitting her at such a time as this to remain with me—can have proceeded from interested motives?"

"Very credible, Isabella. You who were brought up in the good old school, under a mother who proudly disdained the very idea of angling for a son-in-law, you can have no suspicion of the plots, the contrivances, the stratagems recurred to in many fashionable families for the advantageous disposal of supernumerary spinsters. I myself, have been courted by more mothers, aunts, fathers, uncles, and guardians, for their respective stock in hand, than I should find time to sum up in a month. I was in the house once, when a cousin of my own, an orderly, modest sort of girl, who wished to keep quiet, but whom her friends were determined to marry splendidly, was palmed upon a sagacious, solemn, wily baronet, who had eight or ten thousand per annum, did not care a rush for the damsel, and was looked upon by every body as a

determined batchelor. But he was finally cajoled into the match, by the united machinations of those around her. He cut his hand one morning at breakfast, and because the good girl turned qualmish at the sight of blood, they persuaded him that she was fainting through excess of sensibility—sensibility for his gashed thumb! —She once, by an unlucky jog, overset a dish of coffee which he was carrying to his lips, and because she cried with vexation at her own awkwardness, they assured him she was weeping at the idea of having scalded him—a fortnight after, he married her!".

"Oh, Charles," cried Lady Isabella, in an accent of real regret, "I was so much disposed to admire, and even love this Adela Cleveland, that I am seriously mortified at the suspicions which you have awakened, and the new light in which you have represented her."

"Pooh, pooh! Don't expect too many perfections united in one individual. This Adela is as lovely a creature as I almost ever beheld; she is likewise, I am persuaded, extremely sensible, and if it was the way of

the world, might be sufficiently disinterested. But, urged on by sanguine relations, and the consciousness of being at the mercy of a father who seems determined not to bestow upon her a shilling, why should you demand from her the heroism to resist so favourable an opportunity of endeavouring at once to step into affluence and high rank? Yet, Somerville and his wife have so extensive an acquaintance, that I feel a little indignant at their levelling their whole artillery against poor Ennerdale. In the course of the season, there can scarcely be a doubt that Miss Cleveland would attract many admirers, and perhaps some substantial weighty offers. I heard Harley speaking of her yesterday in the most magnificent terms—and surely he would be a prize well worth expending a little powder and shot upon."

"He would—were he less hideously ugly!"

"Oh, if our pretty visitor, either from choice or necessity, is a true speculating miss, she won't mind his ugliness! But I know not that she is yet aware of the distinction with which Sir Patrick regards her. At all events, should Ennerdale, unmindful

of worldly considerations, fall a prey to a pair of bright eyes, I am far better disposed to wish success to those that sparkle in the head of Adela, than to the still more keenly piercing ones of General Cleveland's daughter, Jemima."—

"Is he then an object of attention to *two* of these Clevelands?"

"So palpably, so manifestly, that Jemima may rather be said to attack than to invite him. I heard some young men the other night at Mrs. Copeland's ball, rally him in the most open manner upon his obvious importance to each of the fair candidates; and on his professing an intention not to dance, they insinuated that his perseverance in that design would last no longer than till one of the rival cousins should assail him with a direct or covert application. But it so happened that Jemima never came. Somerville, however, soon joined us, and in the full bearing of all the party, began the frankest solicitations in behalf of his own favourite. A general smile appeared upon every face, which Ennerdale observing, he gave to this ill-managed requisition, a hasty and positive negative. Whether he was in-

fluenced by feelings of delicacy towards the lady, or of vexation against the gentleman, I will not pretend to decide. The self-possession, however, the air of dignified composure with which Adela endured the shock of his refusal, was one of the most striking things I ever witnessed. It immediately imposed, I will not say *silence* upon the surrounding observers, for they were not so gross as to throw out sarcasms in her hearing—but it imposed respect and decorum upon their very looks; and in me, inspired the highest opinion at once of her sense, spirit, and temper. My only quarrel with her is, that she is a Cleveland."—

They were now in the midst of the throng of carriages surrounding Lady Sarah Farnham's door, and the conversation ended.

CHAP. II.

EXPOSTULATIONS.

ADELA meanwhile, had ascended to the drawing-room at her sister's with tolerable tranquillity, and answered the first interrogations addressed to her with apparent composure: but when, on approaching nearer to the lights, she gave Mrs. Somerville an opportunity of observing her countenance, that lady descried in it so much disturbance, that, in great alarm, she instantly exclaimed—

"My dearest girl—what is the matter?"

Adela struggled with her feelings a moment—attempted to speak—attempted to smile—failed in the effort, and burst into tears.—

"Oh, Adela, you fill me with a thousand distressing apprehensions!—Is poor little Ossely worse?—Is he dead?—Speak, I entreat you, for this suspense agitates and terrifies me beyond endurance!"—

"Forgive me, Elinor, and do not be alarmed," in broken accents replied the perturbed girl—"It is nothing material—

nothing really calamitous—but my spirits are harassed—I am mortified, and, perhaps, too, a little angry."—

"I would rather have you angry than afflicted. But who has angered my kind and good-humoured Adela?"

"Oh, Elinor,—your husband will really drive me distracted! He has no feeling for me—no regard for appearances—no concern to preserve for me the public esteem! He exposes me to the derision, the degrading suspicions of a whole family! He compels me, in self-defence, to appear capricious, dissipated, frivolous;—to abandon the station in which you had left me—to forsake a charge for which I was beginning to be so deeply interested—and what, perhaps, is the worst of all, to wound your ears by these ill-directed complaints! But make some allowance for me, dear Elinor; I am fretted and humiliated till I have lost all patience."—

She then proceeded to relate, for Mrs. Somerville was too much amazed to interrupt her, what had just passed at Lady Isabella's; and when the detail was ended, thus went on—

"Oh, if Mr. Somerville did but reflect upon the injury he is doing me by these unguarded, or rather let me call them, unfounded, insinuations of my anxiety to please Lord Ennerdale—if he would but recollect the peculiarity of my family circumstances—the stigma which many may attach to me on my poor mother's account—the apparently irrevocable determination of my father to afford me no countenance, and the caution necessary to ward off the idea that, fearing to be left portionless, I have adopted the selfish policy of a fortune-hunter—Oh, my dearest sister, if he would but bear these particulars in mind, I should be spared the frequent shocks which he gives, as well to my pride, as to all my better feelings!"

Mrs. Somerville, struck by these forcible representations, said every thing that affection could dictate, to sooth and comfort her, and had the candour to admit, that her spirit was not thus cruelly wounded without considerable provocation.

"It is not, indeed!" resumed Adela.—"You, no doubt, regard Julius as a prejudiced counsellor; yet we must all allow him the credit due to unimpeachable veracity; and

he has communicated to me, as warnings, such opinions, such expressions of Lord Ennerdale's, as convince me that I should be the last being in the world whom the most zealous endeavours of Mr. Somerville would ever tempt him to select for the future partner of his life."—

She then in an accent the most dejected, and with eyes swimming in tears, repeated the purport of those severe reflections which Lord Ennerdale was accused of having uttered at Eton respecting individuals placed with regard to their parents, in a predicament similar to her own.

Mrs. Somerville warmly contested the probability of the report.

"It is a thousand to one," cried she, "whether he ever pronounced a single sentence of this unfeeling harangue. The little incendiaries who asserted it of him, might do it for the mischievous pleasure of fomenting the dislike already subsisting between him and Julius: or, at the worst, it was merely the crude, undigested notion of a boy, high-spirited, but too inexperienced to know, that in the present state of society, our personal faults are all for which it is

equitable to render us obnoxious to disgrace, —not the frailties of our kindred.—My dearest Adela, it is a misfortune, no doubt —a severe one—to have a mother whose conduct has been reprehensible: but such, I fear, is the depravity of the times, that it is a misfortune which you share in common with too many others, to be marked out for peculiar obloquy. It entails upon you, indeed, as you seem amply aware, a necessity to be doubly circumspect in manners, and doubly pure and steady in principle: but can this be a grievance to my upright, and well-intentioned sister?"—

Adela re-assured by the whole tenour of this speech, and particularly gratified by its conclusion, leaned forward, and kissed Mrs. Somerville's cheek; and that lady, returning the affectionate salutation, then added—

"And now, my best love, go and prepare for Mrs. Ross's arrival; and since the fates and destinies ordain that you *should* attend this masquerade, make yourself as easy and happy at it, as conscious worth, and the most artless delicacy ought to render you."—

When her toilet was completed, Adela, in the dress of a Virgin of the Sun, made to

correspond with that of the two young ladies she was to go with, went back into the drawing-room to sit with her sister till Mrs. Ross called for her.

Mr. Somerville, during her absence, had returned home, and was now in earnest conversation with his wife. He started up as Adela entered, and addressing her with some confusion, said—

"My dear girl, I am ashamed to look at you! Elinor has been giving me such a tremendous lecture, and I have been such an unpardonable Marplot, that I fear you never will be friends with me again."

Adela held out to him her hand.—

"Upon one condition," cried she, "I will be friends with you this very moment."

"Name it—I shall subscribe to it implicitly."

"Promise me, then, that you will henceforth have no *plots* to *mar!*"

"Oh, Adela," cried Mrs. Somerville, laughing, "this is asking too much: he cannot live without a project."

"But let his projects be wholly independent of me or my concerns."

"Well, well; I will in future give you

no cause for complaint. But pray answer me one question—do you return to Portman Square to-night?"

"Yes, I do; Lady Isabella pressed it too earnestly to be denied. And moreover, my dear brother, I thought that after the strange speeches you had made, it would look, if I refused to return, as if I felt conscious that my designs were detected, and that it could no longer answer any purpose to stay amongst them."

"The only design you have, I believe, is to make me heartily ashamed of myself—and you have succeeded! But blessings on you for not visiting my offences on their heads! Poor Ennerdale thought it was all over—and it would be impossible to describe to you how deeply he seemed to regret...."

Adela interrupted him, and shaking her head incredulously, said—

"My dear Mr. Somerville—you are romancing!"

"I give you my word of honour, I am not!"

"Oh, then, I must believe you. But

now, tell me—how do you like my dress?"

"Better than some of the icy incrustations about your heart. The dress is beautiful, and you look beautiful in it."

"Your most obedient! But how is it, that in despite of all our quarrels, I never receive such flattering compliments from any body as from you?"

"Oh, because other men will not bestow compliments without some prospect of remuneration: your insensibility to love is nothing to me—I am satisfied with your friendship. *Disposable* men are not so easily contented."

"Disposable men, as you call them, till they acquire the art of rendering themselves agreeable, must endure, with resignation, to be merely tolerated. You would not have us affect to be in love, in order to bribe from them a little flattery?"

"Affect to be in love! No, certainly: but when you, or any other woman, meet with a highly deserving object, why resist the impression he might make upon your heart? Why not be in love in earnest?"

"I cannot answer you better than in Ro-

salind's words:—'*Love is merely a madness; and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip, as madmen do!*'"

"Well, Adela," cried Mr. Somerville, angrily, "I can only say, for your comfort, that with all this haughtiness, and all this systematic apathy, no man will ever be so madly his own enemy as to fall in love with you! Your countenance may attract, but your coldness will repel; and we shall have you gradually exchanging the epithet of the beautiful Miss Cleveland, for that, at the age of forty, of the prudent, but forsaken Mrs. Adela!"

Mrs. Somerville and her blooming sister laughed heartily at this formidable prophecy, and yet more at the air of pique with which it was uttered: but before they could make any observation upon it, a carriage stopped at the door, and Adela was summoned to attend Mrs. Ross.

"Have you no beaux of your party?" said Somerville, as he led her down stairs—

"I know nothing of the matter. If Mrs. Ross has provided none, it is probably because she thinks that at a private house we shall do very well without."

When Mr. Somerville approached the carriage to hand her into it, one of Mrs. Ross's young companions called out—

"Oh, Mr. Somerville, how idle and shabby it is of you to let us go by ourselves! Here are three poor Coras," alluding to their costume, "and not a single Rolla—not even an Alonzo among them."

"I must stay and take care of my Cora above stairs," answered he—"But no doubt, before the evening is over, my failure will be very agreeably supplied."

He then bade them good night, wished them much amusement, and the carriage drove on.

And much amusement Adela, at least, obtained. Revived before she set out the cheerful conversation in which she had been engaged, and appeased by Mr. Somerville's promises of future caution, she felt in a disposition to look at the novel scene to which she was introduced, with a light heart, and animated spirits, and to extract from every thing which she saw, some food for gaiety, or some subject either for approbation or ridicule.

Her figure, infinitely superior to that of

her two companions, although theirs were of a description to assist in forming a pretty group, attracted considerable attention, and several masks followed her through the rooms, and occasionally addressed her. But amidst the throng, two personages, one in the garb of a Friar, the other in that of a Spaniard, particularly distinguished her, and, as if by mutual agreement, persevered in attending her, wherever she directed her steps. Unmolested, however, by their assiduity—for the Spaniard, though always at her elbow, did little else than watch her eyes, and the Friar was peculiarly pleasant—she strolled on, willing to answer those who sought to draw her into conversation, but equally well pleased to remain silent, and abundantly satisfied with the entertainment of gazing at, and listening to the various parties assembled around her.

"You seem, my dear daughter," said the Friar, "to be a novice in such scenes as these; yet you look at every group with nearly equal interest; you honour not one individual with greater distinction than another—we flit before you like passing shadows, and are forgotten. In what spot, and

under what circumstances would the feelings of your heart be more called into action?"

"Oh, here," cried Adela, "I forget that I have a heart!"

"And in places," resumed he, with quickness, "where you might be tempted to remember being in possession of such an incumbrance, you perhaps deem it wise and necessary to suppress its emotions!"

"I am not come here to confession, my good Father," said Adela, a little surprised at this speech.

"And why not? You might, I am persuaded, venture a very unreserved one, with as little, or less danger of incurring penance than any individual in the room."—

Then pausing a moment, and glancing his eyes towards the Spaniard—

"How comes it," resumed he, lowering his voice, "that I so perseveringly behold in your train, a native of the country which has been most inimical to your own? Are you in subjection to a Spaniard even in this soil of freedom?"

"The love of gold perhaps attracts him," answered Adela, looking down at the glitter-

ing sun upon her bosom, and the other decorations of her Peruvian attire.

"Take care," resumed the Friar, "that you do not suffer the reverse of this to become the case—that you do not let the love of gold seize upon *your* heart! By some means or other—perhaps by the depredations of his ancestors in your fatally-wealthy land—he is known to be a walking ingot, abounding in all the riches of the Eastern as well as the Western world. You, my fair daughter, the descendant of a people whose temples have been despoiled—whose palaces have been plundered—whose mines have been exhausted—you can have brought with you into exile but a scanty portion of that bright metal whose rays first allured the cruel Spaniards to your shores. Renounce not, however, because impoverished, the pure worship of the effulgent Sun,—exchange it not for the sordid idolatry of the Golden Calf!"

"How incomprehensible is this language!" exclaimed Adela, amazed—"Who, and what are you? And wherefore an exhortation which indicates of me so degrading an opinion?"

Without answering this enquiry, the Friar now touched her arm, and fixing his eyes upon the Spaniard, who was unmasking to take some refreshment, he said—

"You know that countenance?"

"Know it?" repeated Adela, half laughing, "Yes, certainly. It appertains to Sir Patrick Harley.—Is he the *walking ingot?*"

"Have you never heard that he is immensely rich?"

"I believe I have, and I am glad—at least not sorry—to hear it confirmed."—

"How do I wish that you would honestly tell me why!"

"Perhaps you are his friend?"

"By no means—barely his acquaintance."—

"Why, then, from a principle of humanity, I am not sorry that a man who is so dull and so unprepossessing, should happen to be so rich. Money, to him, must be an almost indispensable recommendation."—

"It will obtain him a handsome wife, you may depend."

"Have any of your own relations confided to you their designs upon his freedom?"

The Friar laughed—

"Ah, lady," cried he, "my aged gravity is no match for your youthful sprightliness.—Besides, the night wears apace. I must to my convent. But, lady, I go impressed with sentiments very highly to your credit: I admire your demeanour since you have been here—and I venerate the delicacy of feeling that induced you to come!"

He then mingled with the crowd, and disappeared, leaving Adela in astonishment at his last words, and vainly endeavouring to conjecture who he could be, and to what he could allude—

"He venerates," repeated she, "the delicacy of feeling that induced me to come!—How should those feelings be understood by any human creature except my sister?"

Whilst thus internally perplexing herself, she was recognized and immediately joined by her brother—

"Who was the loquacious Friar," said he, "whom I saw you just now so deeply engaged in conversation with?"

"I have not," answered she, "the least idea."—

"Have you no suspicion it might be—Ennerdale?"

"Oh, no; a place of gaiety like this, would be the last that he would choose to come to, to-night. His son is very dangerously ill."—

"You have seen him then, to-day, as usual?"

"My dear Julius, I will attempt no mystery with you. This, however, is not a time to enter into a detail of the causes which led to such an arrangement: but the fact is, that I am at present a guest at Lady Isabella Annesley's. Elinor will explain to you how this came about; and when you hear exactly the whole state of the case, I trust that you will absolve me from all blame."

"I have done with the useless and unheeded office of censor;" cried Julius, with an air of bitterness; "you have no more blame to apprehend from me, than I have hope to influence you. Should the question, however, ever come before another tribunal—should the propriety of this new intimacy ever be taken into consideration by my father, I much doubt whether you will find

him disposed to give it a very ready sanction!"

"Julius," said Adela, greatly hurt, "why should you address to me this sarcastic language? It is, on every account, pernicious and unjustifiable. Appeal to my reason; or, if you prefer it, alarm, as you have done before, my pride; but never expect to work upon my fears. I require better incitements to action than angry menaces."—

Adela had never spoken with such resolution and spirit to her brother before, and secretly lamented, even while the words passed her lips, that his petulance should give occasion for them. Julius was deeply incensed, as well as extremely surprised at her firmness. They were in no place, however, where he could give free scope to his anger; he therefore hastily quitted her, and she saw him no more the whole evening.

Mrs. Cleveland and Jemima, the former in the costume of Queen Elizabeth, and the latter personifying one of the ladies of her court, had early been struck by the elegance of Adela's appearance, and discovered very speedily, on hearing her speak,

who she was. Yet they made no effort to approach her, till mistaking, as Julius had done, the Friar for Lord Ennerdale, they were drawn forward by the hope of alluring him to join their own party. But the sound of his voice immediately dispelled their error, and they were on the point of quitting her vicinity, when Jemima, whose quick faculty of hearing nothing could escape, caught from Adela's communication to her brother the information that she was a guest at Lady Isabella Annesley's. The blankest and most hopeless despair took possession of her bosom on first hearing this cruel and every way mortifying intelligence. After some time, however, given to secret and bitter chagrin, determined not to yield to a competitor without a struggle, and espying some advantageous uses which might be made of the unpromising circumstance, she smoothed her brow, and went up to Adela with an extended hand,—

"I have just convinced myself," cried she, "after watching you for the last half hour, that I behold, though under a mask, a well-known friend. How have you been amused to-night, my dear cousin?"

Adela was somewhat surprised at this sudden renewal of cordiality, after so long and marked a coldness; but never averse from accepting overtures of conciliation, she took the hand that was held out to her, and cheerfully answered,—

"I have been better entertained by the whimsical variety at this assembly, than, except at the Opera, I have ever found myself at any other place of amusement in London."

"Do you then prefer it to a ball?"

"I love dancing: but I have never had any partners I liked so well as the music at the Opera, or the lively conversation which I have heard here to-night."

"I saw you talking a considerable time with a Friar.—Was he pleasant? Do you know him?"

"He was particularly pleasant; but I have not any suspicion who he is."

"Are you here with Mrs. Ross?"

"Yes; she was so good as to take charge of me in addition to two nieces."

"And how in the world did she bring you? She has only a chariot."

"We all contrived to find room in it."

"Oh, let mamma set you down when you go away. We have a coach, and only ourselves and Sir Patrick Harley in it."

Adela would have excused herself from accepting this offer; but Jemima, for reasons best understood by herself, urged it so pressingly, and induced her mother so civilly to second her, that at length she prevailed, and undertook herself to communicate this new plan to Mrs. Ross.

The remainder of the evening was enlivened by no conversation that could make Adela amends for the departure of the Friar, who, although he had once somewhat piqued her, had mingled with the freedom of his admonitions so much pleasantry, and interspersed them with so many flattering expressions, that he proved much the most attractive character to her of any in the whole assembly.

Sir Patrick Harley, who after he had once taken off his mask did not again resume it, presented his arm to Adela when Mrs. Cleveland's carriage was called, leaving that lady and her daughter to put themselves under the care of some other gentleman who made a timely offer of his services.

As soon as they had driven safely through the crowd, Adela became aware of the necessity of requesting that her aunt would order her to be set down at Mr. Annesley's. Unsuspicious that Jemima already knew she was an inmate there, the task of announcing it was particularly unpleasant to her. But she saw no means of avoiding it; and convinced that, however temporary, her abode in Portman Square could not remain a secret, she endeavoured to speak of it with perfect composure. But Jemima, whose curiosity to learn how she had become installed at Lady Isabella's was upon the rack, suffered not so fair an opportunity of gratifying it to pass unimproved. She affected total ignorance of the little boy's illness, though she had distinctly heard Adela mention it to her brother; and now harassed her by a thousand questions, each new one more disagreeable than the last—

"How long," said she, "has Lady Isabella asked you to stay?"

"No time was specified," answered Adela; "I may very possibly leave her to-morrow."—

"Why are Lord Ennerdale's children at her house instead of his own?"

"I believe, because his is undergoing some alteration."—

"I suppose then, he himself quite lives at Mr. Annesley's?"

"He dined there to-day."—

"And there you left him, did you not?"

"I did."

"Does Lady Isabella appear disposed to become very intimate with you?"

"She seems too rational to indulge such a disposition on a single day's acquaintance."

"Oh, then, she is rather cool and distant?"

"Not at all—she is just as I wish her, polite and obliging; but without romantic professions."—

"And how does Mr. Annesley behave?"

"I have seen him but for a moment; he did not dine at home."

"Did he receive you pleasantly?"

"Yes—for he did not, my dear Jemima, give me the trouble of answering a single question!"

"Oh, you must not be surprised at my feeling a little curiosity to know how you

accomplished this clever arrangement. You may depend upon it, the feeling will be universal, though every body will not venture, as I do, to apply to the fountain-head for information."—

"I have no sort of objection," said Adela, laughing, "to your publishing, for *every body's* satisfaction, the result of your own laborious investigation."

"The publication, however, would be incomplete, unless it gave the result of the experiment itself. When that is determined, the whole together, drawn up in the form of a manual, might prove extremely useful to young ladies newly disembarked from the country in quest of matrimonial preferment."—

Adela, for a moment, felt disposed to answer this impertinent observation with great asperity. But, detesting that sort of dialogue which is made up of tart, and often witless repartee, and which serves but to prolong altercation, she suppressed the rising temptation, and, as her anger cooled, found reason to acknowledge, with self-congratulation, the truth of La Bruyere's maxim: "*Il n'y a rien qui rafraîchisse le*

sang, comme d'avoir sû éviter de faire une sottise. It was a matter of some concern to her, however, that Sir Patrick Harley should be made the auditor of such insinuations: but trusting to his accustomed slowness of comprehension as a safeguard against his misinterpretations, she endeavoured to attach no more importance to his presence than if she had known him to be utterly divested of the sense of hearing.

When the carriage stopped at Mr. Annesley's door, the courteous Baronet descended to assist her in alighting, and surprised her not a little by then saying in a low voice—

"I have heard things to-night, Miss Cleveland, which give me a great deal of pain. I would you had the power and the inclination to tell me that they are all unfounded!"

"I have both, Sir Patrick," answered Adela.

"And do you really assert that Jemima is mistaken?"

"It would not well be possible to be so more completely!—Good night, Sir Patrick."—

"Good night, Miss Cleveland—*dear* Miss Cleveland!" he added, in a whisper no less emphatical than the pressure of the hand with which it was accompanied.

Adela, much wondering, and by no means delighted, hastily entered the house, and Sir Patrick returned to the carriage.

CHAP. III.

INTRUSION.

Lady Isabella's maid, Adela was concerned to find, had been ordered to sit up for her, and now appeared to light her to her room. Amy had been purposely detained by Mrs. Somerville in Cumberland Place, lest her sable complexion should give any shock to the weakened nerves of the young invalid.

"I want no help, indeed, Mrs. Carey," said Adela, civilly apologizing to the drowsy attendant. "Pray go to bed immediately. I know which is my room, and when I stay out so late, I always undress myself."—

Mrs. Carey thought it incumbent upon her, at first, to press her offers of service

with some earnestness: but on their being again declined, she gave Adela a bed-room candle, and with much internal satisfaction, retired to her own chamber.

Before she could resolve to repair to rest herself, however, Adela felt anxious to ascertain from personal observation, the exact situation of poor little Ossely. She stepped lightly up the stairs, and opening the nursery-door with extreme caution, beheld the faithful servant of her sister standing near the fire, warming some drink intended for her young patient.

On perceiving Adela, she seemed much rejoiced.

"I am glad you are come, Ma'am," whispered she, "for the little gentleman is waking now, and grown very restless; and I was sadly afraid that when he saw only a stranger near him, he would fret. Perhaps he will know you."

Adela, forgetful of her masquerade dress, stole to the bed-side, and put her face within the curtain. Lord Ossely's eyes were open, and met hers; though dim and languid, they were no longer vacant—and at sight of a countenance so young, so lovely, and so re-

assuring, a faint smile seemed to play round his lips. Adela, delighted at this indication of returning intelligence, opened the curtain wider, and bent forward to kiss him, saying in the softest and most caressing voice—

"Are you better, dearest Algernon?"

The child, without answering, gazed at her bright decorations with the extremest amazement—He appeared to look upon her as something scarcely of this world:—he put his feeble hand out of bed and touched some part of the gold that shone before his eyes—regarded her again and again with undiminished wonder—and, at last, in an accent half pleased, half perplexed, said—

"What are you, Ma'am?—A good Fairy?"

Adela smiled, but was retreating to throw aside ornaments so ill-suited to the scene, when, perceiving her intention, he hastily added—

"Oh, don't take them off! They look pretty—I like to see them."—

On hearing this, she sat down upon the bed by him, and for a considerable time he surveyed with great admiration her appearance. She spoke to him but little, fearful

of hurrying him; yet now and then, pressed her lips to his cheek, murmuring out a few expressions of endearment—and, at last, asked him if he was thirsty. He said yes, and the nurse approached with the drink she had been preparing.—

He heard her advance with evident uneasiness, but when she drew close to the bed, and he raised his eyes to her face, no language can describe the expression of satisfaction which his countenance instantly displayed.

"Who is that?" he earnestly demanded.

Adela was afraid to tell him too suddenly that the good woman was there in the place of his former nurse, and therefore only answered—

"It is a very kind person, Algernon, whom your aunt has engaged to assist in taking care of you whilst you are ill."

She then took the cup into her own hands, and supported him whilst he sat up and drank its contents; after which, saying mildly, "thank you," he threw himself back upon his pillow, and tried, half smiling, to draw Adela down in order that her face might rest close to his. She indulged

him in this fancy, and putting her feet up upon the bed, lay contentedly beside him, her neck encircled by one of his little arms, till, overcome by weariness, her eyes insensibly closed, and she sunk into a profound sleep. The child also, speedily began again to slumber; and Margaret, unwilling immediately to disturb them, quitted the room a few minutes, to go in quest of a fresh supply of fuel.

Though Adela's was the sound repose of youth and health, yet she was easily awakened by the voice of her little companion, whispering close to her ear—" there's papa!"

She instantly raised her head, and looking towards the foot of the bed, beheld, as if rooted to the spot by surprise, Lord Ennerdale himself.

Her slumbering faculties were restored to their full activity in a moment. She started from her recumbent posture, and springing upon the floor, exhibited—the hour and the place considered—so singular a figure, that Lord Ennerdale found it impossible to regard her without a smile—

" I beg ten thousand pardons for this un-

intentional intrusion," cried he; "I knew not, my dear Miss Cleveland, that you were returned. At the door of this room, whither I was led by anxiety to know how Algernon had rested, I spoke,—no one answered me; I then advanced, and found the apartment apparently deserted by all but its helpless inhabitant. In some consternation, I approached the bed,—two faces were reposing upon the pillow, one of which I saw belonged to the most resplendent visitor that ever deigned to enter a sick-chamber. Algernon, however, unawed by such magnificence, seemed happy and composed—his arms surrounded you—and before I could retreat, he opened his eyes, knew me, and awakened you."

"Nothing can be more satisfactory than this little explanation," said Adela, to whom it had given time to recover from her first confusion, "nor any thing more mad, I doubt not, than my present appearance!—But, I have not long been come home—before I went to my own apartment, I was desirous to know how Lord Ossely did—he seemed pleased to see me, detained me by his side, and I unconsciously fell asleep.

The nurse, however, was here when I entered, and I dare say will not forsake her charge many minutes."

She had scarcely ceased speaking, when Margaret re-appeared. She knew Lord Ennerdale perfectly, but the sight of him in the nursery at that moment was so unexpected, that she started, and almost dropped from her grasp the heavy load with which she was burthened.

"We seem," said the Earl, observing the sort of dismay into which he had thrown her, "to have had nothing so much at heart this morning as to frighten each other. Magaret's absence first alarmed me, and now, I suspect, my presence is retaliating the alarm upon her. I am very sorry to have been such a perturbator—to have occasioned you also, Miss Cleveland, such an unpleasant surprise; but let me only hear your joint opinion of my poor boy, and I am gone."

They both asserted with alacrity, that they believed him to be considerably better.

"Happy and most welcome assurance!" exclaimed he.

His face beamed with joy whilst he spoke,

and moving from the foot of the bed, he went close up to the child, took one of his hands, and said in a tone and with a look of the warmest affection:

"My Algernon—tell me yourself that you are better; tell me that I shall soon see you, healthy and happy, smiling upon every friend who, in your illness, has shewn you such generous compassion!"—Then, embracing him with great emotion—"my poor little boy!" added he, "never shall you, if your father can avert it from you, experience unhappiness again!"

Tears started into the child's eyes—he did not however attempt to speak, but detaining his father's hand, and fondly stroking it, he seemed to feel his kindness more sensibly than he had language or strength to express.

Lord Ennerdale, after a few minutes delay, gently withdrew from his son's hold, and stepped towards the door to retire: but stopping, and turning before he reached it—

"My dear Miss Cleveland," said he, "I cannot go till you gratify me with the assurance that you will repair immediately to bed. The short and broken slumber which

you have had, will leave you chill and comfortless the whole day, unless you now seek the refreshment of a few hours sound repose. Will you promise to follow this advice?"

"I will, indeed,—and am fully sensible that it is the best which could be given."

"Good night, then—and may your rest be as peaceful and reviving as the motive which induced you to defer seeking it sooner, was kind and benevolent!"

He then left the room.

Margaret now grew very urgent with her to obey the exhortation which she had received, and becoming every instant more sensible of its propriety, she, at length, retired, and enjoyed four or five hours uninterrupted sleep. The nurse had orders, at ten o'clock, to call her; she awoke cheerful and perfectly recovered; and having paid her little neighbour a short visit, and found him going on exactly as she could wish, descended to the family breakfast.

Lady Isabella had quitted her apartment but a few minutes before her. The conversation which she had held with Mr. Annesley relative to Adela since they had last met,

recurred to her recollection instantly on beholding its object, and involuntarily cast a shade of coldness and reserve over her countenance as she first addressed her. The change was immediately *felt* rather than *seen* by Adela, whom it surprised no less than it secretly offended. Had a longer degree of intimacy seemed to warrant so frank a procedure, her first impulse would have been to ask an explanation of such apparent caprice: as it was, she could only determine upon affecting blindness, and struggle to look and to speak exactly as she had done the preceding evening.

"But if this continues," she mentally cried, "I will not defer my departure a single day—not half a day!

"I have heard," said Lady Isabella, "excellent accounts of Algernon through my maid; but was going up to see him myself just as you entered. I will now put off my visit till after breakfast."

Adela begged she would not do this on her account, as it was perfectly immaterial to her how long she waited.

"But I am afraid," resumed Lady Isabella, "that Mr. Annesley would not be

quite so accommodating. Whether he rises early or late, he is always impatient for breakfast. As for my brother, he is already gone out. I saw him a moment before he went, and from him too, heard very favourable tidings of the invalid."

Adela wished to know whether she had likewise heard the particulars of her own early interview with him in the nursery. She was upon the point of making the enquiry, a deeply rooted contempt of all unnecessary mystery urging her yet more than curiosity to speak upon the subject: but Mr. Annesley appeared, and for the present, sealed up her lips.

The manner in which he paid his compliments to her, formed a very striking contrast with that of Lady Isabella, and was the most animated and politely cordial possible. He seemed immediately to discern the lurking shyness which had crept upon his wife's aspect and feelings—and arraigning himself as the cause, he dextrously did all in his power at once to withdraw Adela's attention from it, and to talk and laugh away from Lady Isabella's recollection, every vestige

of the prejudice he had been accessary in instilling.

He begged Adela would give them some account of the masquerade:

"Did you," said he, "through their disguises, discover who any of the characters were?"

"There were, probably," answered she, "very few persons present whom I should have known *without* a mask; still fewer whom, *with* one, I had penetration enough to find out."

"Did you dance, or engage in conversation, or were you a mere passive looker-on?"

"In going through the rooms, I was occasionally addressed by several of the company, whose talents however, as speakers, did not appear to me quite equal to their confidence."

"I am afraid diffidence seldom bears a just proportion to the insufficiency which should call it forth; those who have confidence are as often void of talents, as those who have talents are void of confidence. But you were unlucky at this your first introduction to a species of amusement so

generally in favour, to meet with none but flippant blockheads."

"I was by no means in so pitiable a predicament. One mask accosted me, who was a delightful exception to the general run of unmeaning speakers, and proved the very reverse of every thing either flippant or dull."

"What character was he in?" enquired Lady Isabella.

"That of a Friar—and the most conversable and social Friar you can imagine. I liked him extremely; but yet, I cannot acquit him of a design to tease me somewhat unfeelingly.—Perhaps, however, he mistook me for somebody else, and my internal consciousness might lead me erroneously to conclude, that a discourse so applicable to my real position *must* be aimed exclusively at myself. He taxed me," added she, half smiling, "with being poor; and though the inferences he chose to draw from that circumstance were not just, yet the fact itself was too true, not to encourage a suspicion that he was thoroughly aware to whom he spoke."

"I begin to think," said Mr. Annesley,

"that you had to contend with a very rude and troublesome personage."

"No, indeed; you judge him too severely. He was sarcastic, but not bitter; and the only thing I had to lament was, that he should happen to be too agreeable to render his observations mere matters of indifference."

"Could he hear you speaking of him with this candour and moderation, how must his heart smite him for having given you an instant's pain!"

"I am not quite so new to the world, as to go to a masquerade with any expectation of finding that the feelings will be regarded, if a shrewd and pointed allusion can be made: and I take it for granted, that if my friend the Friar really knew who I was, he thought more of the amusement of perplexing me, than of giving me either pain or pleasure."

When Mr. Annesley, after a breakfast which his presence alone rendered sociable, left the two ladies to themselves, Adela grew very anxious for the arrival of her sister: confirming herself more and more, as Lady Isabella's gravity continued, in the

wish of getting away, and in regret for ever having been induced to remain.

Meanwhile a languid conversation filled up the interval which Lady Isabella,—as new to the practice of studied coldness as Adela was averse from being its object—no less desired to abridge than did her luckless companion.

Happily, her ladyship at length recollected the design which she had professed of paying a visit after breakfast to the nursery; and rising, with secret alacrity, said—

"If my brother comes in before I have been to look at his little boy, he will think me quite unkind. You have seen him, I think you said, already?"

"Yes," replied Adela, glad to seize the opportunity of speaking openly of her early interview with the Earl—"And I have seen Lord Ennerdale also, by the strangest accident in the world. Did he mention to you our meeting, at four or five o'clock this morning, in little Algernon's room?"

"No;—but explain how it happened."

Adela then, without preface or parade, quietly and simply related what had passed.

So voluntary a proof of unreserve, appeared to touch Lady Isabella with contrition for her late suspicions, and for the distant behaviour which those suspicions had induced her to assume. She took Adela's hand, and in a tone of self-reproach said—

" Ah, my dear Miss Cleveland, how infinitely more attentive have you been to our poor little invalid than I have! I am ashamed to own, that on my return from Lady Sarah Farnham's, I merely *sent* to know how he did; whilst you, who had been up so many hours later, could not be satisfied to go to rest till you had seen him yourself."—

" What else am I here for," said Adela, smiling, " but to prove that you were not mistaken in thinking me a good nurse?"—

" You are here," cried Lady Isabella warmly, " for the solace and delight of us all!"

Adela, raising her eyes, with perhaps an involuntary expression of surprise at a compliment so little expected, Lady Isabella coloured, and said—

" You must not look at me as if you distrusted my sincerity. I am not very often, I hope, quite so *maussade* as I may have

appeared this morning. Pray forgive me, and let us go up and visit my nephew together."

All resentment was banished from Adela's breast by this ingenuous concession, and they were leaving the room in perfect amity, when Mrs. Somerville was announced, and the next minute made her appearance, escorted by Lord Ennerdale, who had walked with her from Cumberland Place.

As soon as she was seated, and had enquired how every thing was going on above stairs, Mrs. Somerville said—

"I am delighted, Lady Isabella, with your little niece; she was running about the room with my own two girls the whole time I was dressing this morning, and has since been a very amusing companion at our breakfast-table. I prognosticate that she will, some of these days, be a great wit: she already seizes the meaning of a joke better than any child of her age I ever was acquainted with."—

"Do not be offended, my dear Ennerdale," said Lady Isabella, "if I venture to observe, that as she certainly will never be a beauty, it is extremely to be wished that

Mrs. Somerville's prediction of her future wit may be realized."—

"I am not very ambitious," said the Earl, "that she should, professedly, be either a beauty or a wit."

"And be assured," resumed Mrs. Somerville, "that she will never professedly be a fright! She is a little sun-burnt, but her features are pretty, and her countenance is remarkably playful and agreeable."—

"You have the happiest talent in the world, my dear Mrs. Somerville," cried Lord Ennerdale, "of finding out, in every case, its pleasantest aspect."—

Then turning to Adela, he asked her how she bore the fatigue and late hours of the preceding night.—

"Oh, she was down stairs this morning," cried Lady Isabella, "in as reasonable time as if she had had a reasonable share of rest. Had I known how very late it was before she went to bed, I should have been grieved that she left it again so soon."—

"At what hour then did you come back, Adela?" enquired her sister—

Adela told her; and Lady Isabella then gave a laughing account of the rencontre

with Lord Ennerdale in the nursery. Mrs. Somerville was pleased to find that the circumstance had come to light through Adela's own frankness, and having made some trifling observation upon it, asked to be conducted to the sick child.

Lady Isabella would have attended her to his room, but was prevented by hearing the consequential knock of some early morning visitor, and obliged to depute the office to Adela.

On the drawing-room landing-place, the sisters had a distinct view of the new-comer —a tall, elderly lady—who, as she slowly ascended the stairs, attentively surveyed them, bowed slightly to Mrs. Somerville, and with no very benign aspect, resumed her deliberate progress.

"Who is that, Elinor?" said Adela, as soon as they were out of hearing—

"It is the Dowager Lady Ennerdale," answered Mrs. Somerville—"I was not aware that she was come to town, nor do I believe that either the Annesleys or her son-in-law knew that she was arrived."—

"She has a most forbidding look."

"Something has discomposed her, with

which, probably, we have nothing to do. Her curtseying to me at all, was a condescension which I scarcely expected, and is a great improvement in civility since the time when we used to pass each other every seventh day at church in the country."

They were now arrived at the bed-side of little Ossely, who, the moment he beheld Mrs. Somerville, seemed delightedly to recollect her, and eagerly called out—

"When will you take me home with you, Ma'am, as you promised?"

"As soon, my dear little boy, as the physician says you are well enough to get up."

"And where," resumed he, "is sister Harriet?—What a great while it is since I have seen her."—

"She shall come and visit you very soon, Algernon: but we were afraid of letting her talk and play about in your room, till you are stout enough to play with her. But I have brought you a present from her of a nice little story-book full of prints; and you must get my sister (your good Fairy) to read in it to you, and I dare say it will amuse you very much, and not tire

you, or make your head ache half so much as talking."—

She then produced her gift, with two or three quiet toys, which were most gratefully received; and afterwards drawing Adela to a window, said, in a low voice,—

"I have gathered, even unawares to herself, considerable information from my little guest, Lady Harriet, relative to this child's melancholy story. For the honour of human nature I am glad to find, strange as the declaration may sound, that between him and his nurse there have been faults on both sides—at least, if those little impetuosities of temper to which he is subject, deserve to be called faults when put into competition with her vindictive inhumanity. Lady Harriet does not appear to have been ever harshly treated herself by the woman; for her disposition, yielding, though gay, would probably disarm even the most tyrannical nature: but she innocently acknowledged, that her brother, when irritated by contradiction, was apt to throw himself into violent passions, to fight, and to utter the most furious reproaches. The nurse, imperious, and, from being wholly unable to

govern her own temper, ill qualified to manage that of another, resented these childish provocations with outrageous malevolence. The boy was beaten, locked up, deprived for whole days of amusement, air, light, exercise, and even—dreadful to think! —even of nourishment! He and his sister were assured that these severities, exercised on account of his naughtiness, were sanctioned and commanded by their father. The poor babies implicitly believed the cruel falsehood. Harriet learnt to think of Lord Ennerdale with fear and dislike;—and Algernon, after a long and ineffectual struggle against superior force, fell into a sort of moody apathy. His passions were not softened, not eradicated—they were merely smothered by sullen and concentrated despair.—A deep and bitter sense of his own injuries, and an inveterate detestation of his oppressor, rooted itself in his mind—undermined his strength, shook his nerves to pieces, and brought on all the debility to which we now see him reduced. It is probable that the wretched woman, at the commencement of this unequal contest, had no deliberate ill design. But she adopted, to

correct him; the very means, which, for a while, were the most calculated to inflame his constitutional violence; and growing more and more exasperated herself, she persevered in these means with aggravated inflexibility, till his spirit was externally subdued, though internally, all was rage, hatred, and turbulence. You turn pale at this recital, Adela;—it is indeed a fearful one! It has conveyed a dearly purchased lesson to Lord Ennerdale, and never, never will it be effaced from his remembrance!"

"Could you bear, my dear sister, to represent the case in this strong light to him?"

"I should have been a very weak and injudicious friend to have softened it where alone it could be useful to speak so explicitly. He heard me with horror, but with all the gratitude which a mind like his was formed to feel for so painful a proof of disinterested regard. The child is to come to me as soon as he can be removed; and I have promised to take into consideration, when further acquainted with his genuine disposition, the best plan for his future disposal. Severity, we have had ample

conviction, will not do; neither can I suppose, that with so much irascibility, unbounded indulgence will be at all more successful. At present, soothing and tenderness are certainly requisite to bring his mind round to its natural tone: but when the ravages of the late stormy period are repaired, a system of calm, gentle, but steady authority will, I doubt not, be the only one calculated to rear him up to worth and goodness."

"All that you say upon this subject," cried Adela, "appears to me the perfection of wisdom: but when I listen to such sober and rational language, and look at your youthful and lively countenance, I can scarcely persuade myself that my ears are not deceiving me. So much prudence and forethought seem quite incompatible with your age."

"An affectionate mother, my dear Adela, thinks so much about her own children, and studies their dispositions so assiduously, that she very speedily becomes extremely quick-sighted in discerning the ruling propensities of the whole infantine race. But though I always loved children, and when

I was a girl, talked very sentimentally about them as being incapable of all guile, I no longer pretend to love them upon so mistaken a plea as that of their *harmless innocence.* Without due controul, children are terrible little wild beasts! Here and there, you meet with a heart prone to grateful affection, and many of them seem almost *born* with an extraordinary sense of justice; but these are nearly the only virtues I ever found that they possessed without long cultivation;—though of evil qualities, poor little souls! their store is incalculable. A friend of ours, who is a father himself, and as affectionate a one as ever lived, carries this doctrine so far, that I once heard him, in derision of the cant about infantine innocence, aver his belief, that there never was a child in existence who, if its strength had equalled its passions, would not have committed half a dozen murders before it was three years old!"

Here Adela was summoned to the door to receive a note, and told that the servant who brought it, would call for her answer in half an hour.

Great was her surprise on opening it, to perceive that it came from Jemima, who, in a strain of unwonted civility and good-humour, wrote thus—

"We are very anxious, my dear cousin, "to hear how poor Lord Ossely has passed "the night. Pray send us word; and let "me know also whether it will be conve-"nient to you to receive me, if I can con-"trive to call upon you either this morn-"ing or to-morrow.

"Mamma and my sisters desire their "love. We hope you caught no cold last "night.

"Believe me, my dear cousin, yours "very truly.

"JEMIMA CLEVELAND."

Adela, without a single comment, handed the note to her sister the moment she had concluded it.

"This is a very awkward application," said Mrs. Somerville, when in her turn she had read it.—"Lady Isabella, it is well known, does not visit at the General's; yet if you receive Jemima here, is it not like drawing your hostess, whether she will or

not, into forming an acquaintance with her ?"

"I assure you, Elinor, that Lady Isabella is not our fair cousin's object!"

"I assure you, Adela—sagacious as you may think this conjecture—that she *is* her object. Jemima can have very little hope of meeting Lord Ennerdale at home exactly in the middle of the day: but if she can procure an introduction to Lord Ennerdale's sister-in-law, that may do as well; she may hereafter be invited to her ladyship's parties—an intimacy may be established between the two families; she may become a favourite here, and eclipse you!—Are not these speculations worth making some effort to realize ?"—

"But meanwhile, how am I to answer her note ?"

"Why, avoid making her irreconcileably angry. Appoint her for to-morrow, and in the interim, apply to Lady Isabella for permission to receive her. The business altogether, is provoking and disagreeable: but it is very unsafe openly to thwart so pushing and manœuvring a personage as Jemima. She is quite ill disposed enough against you already."

"And would you therefore have me fear and court her?"

"Oh, the heroic scorn there was in that look! My dearest Adela, do not be so childishly high-minded. I am far from wishing you to degrade yourself by servile hypocrisy: but something is due in this world to prudence, and to a just regard for our own security. If you exasperate a girl of Jemima's stamp by daring opposition, there is nothing sarcastic and malicious which she may not spread abroad to your detriment. It is all folly to pretend to invulnerability,—to say that she can do you no harm because she knows of you no ill. Envy can always supply to an ironical spirit, materials for mischief and slander; and if she only gets the laugh on her side, that will be nearly as injurious to you, as if she perverted the judgment, and influenced the conviction of all her hearers."—

"Well—I will answer her as you recommend. But I wish we lived in a world whence it was possible to banish these deliberate insincerities."—

"You shall have a little planet fitted up for yourself, and a few beings formed ex-

pressly to reside with you in it. And it shall have an atmosphere of its own, through which every object shall distinctly appear such as it really is, without embellishment or deception of any kind. Meanwhile, condescend, in *this* terraqueous ball, to look through, and also sometimes to be seen through, a delusive medium—one extremely favourable to the purpose of magnifying our sense of merit, and disguising our consciousness of defects.—And now, write your note to Jemima, and, in the true spirit of the world which you inhabit, tell her that you shall be very happy to see her. Lady Isabella cannot deny you the privilege of receiving so near a relation, though she is certainly entitled to exercise that of remaining invisible herself to whoever she pleases."

As soon as the note was written and sealed, Adela asked her sister how much longer she meant to leave her in Portman Square?

"We will begin talking about your return home to-morrow: but if Lady Isabella presses you to lengthen your stay, I would have you comply, and principally on account of poor little Algernon. Should you leave the house before he is able to quit his room, the

loss of your caresses and attention, and the total want of amusement which he will experience, may depress his spirits, and materially retard his recovery. Lady Isabella, with the best intentions, probably, in the world, does not appear to me to be a proficient in the art of rendering herself interesting or acceptable to children. She would come up every day three or four times, and speak to him for a few minutes with mechanical kindness, and then leave him as dull as she had found him. He wants somebody that can gently awaken his gayer feelings, or encourage his grateful ones. But let us now go back to the drawing-room. I would not have Lady Ennerdale imagine that we avoid her."

Lady Ennerdale, however, before the two sisters re-appeared, had left the house, and left its fair mistress, ever too prone to be influenced by the opinion of the last speaker, in the most ludicrous perplexity as to the feelings she ought finally to encourage respecting Adela and her whole race.

CHAP. IV.

BAFFLING.

The noble matron, just departed, had paid so early a visit for the express purpose of calling Lady Isabella to an account for an act of delinquency of which, assuredly, it was scarcely possible to be more thoroughly guiltless. She had taxed her with being accessary to the sudden dismission of young Ossely's nurse, a woman whom Lady Enerdale had recommended, and in whose welfare she professed to take a considerable interest.

"I only arrived in town," continued the offended Peeress, "at ten o'clock last night, harassed after my journey, and anxious for nothing so much as rest and quiet. But in my hall, the moment I alighted, I beheld poor Manby, drowned in tears, waiting to communicate to me the news of her disgrace. She affected me so much by her complaints, and the resentment which I could not but feel at the inconsiderate treatment she had received, occupied my thoughts so painfully the whole night, that I scarcely was able to

close my eyes. This morning, therefore, instead of writing to you a note, Isabella, to announce my arrival, and to ask you to come to me, I preferred shortening my own suspense, and driving hither to seek an immediate explanation of so extraordinary a transaction. Are you not conscious, that in addition to the barbarity of suffering a faithful domestic to be turned out of your house with such indecent precipitation, you have been guilty of a breach of respect to me, who originally placed her with your poor sister's children?"

"These remonstrances, my dear mother," said Lady Isabella, "should be directed to Lord Ennerdale, and to the friend who was his counsellor—not to me. I had no voice in the affair, and scarcely, even in thought, the slightest participation."

"And who was this officious counsellor?"

"The lady you met in coming up stairs; Mrs. Somerville."

"And pray, my Lord," resumed the Dowager, addressing her son-in-law, "upon what pretence does Mrs. Somerville assume the privilege of interfering in your family arrangements? I heard something of this

sort insinuated by Manby, but regarded it as the empty accusation of a poor irritated creature, scarcely conscious of what she asserted;—yet the sight of Mrs. Somerville in this house, the very moment I entered it, I own somewhat staggered me."

Lord Ennerdale listened to these authoritative interrogations with visible displeasure. He had never been deficient in respect to any member of his wife's family; much less would he have treated with irreverence her mother, who, exclusive of a little antiquated austerity, and some tendency to cherish contracted opinions, was a perfectly estimable character. Yet an attack so direct provoked him, the more especially, as Mrs. Somerville was implicated in it, and seemed so coolly given up to unmerited censure by Lady Isabella.

He entered with earnestness into a detailed account of the whole affair; drew a forcible picture of the indignities his boy had suffered; the state to which they had reduced him; and alledged the opinion of Dr. R— in vindication of his dismission of the nurse; ending by an eulogium upon the friendly conduct of Mrs. Somerville

throughout every part] of the transaction, the most animated and grateful.

Lady Ennerdale was startled at the unusual warmth with which her son-in-law expressed himself. She sat silent some minutes, deeply pondering upon its probable motive; and then, endeavouring to rein in her anger, said—

"How long has your lordship been so well acquainted with this insinuating young woman?"

"I introduced myself to her and her husband during the early part of my last residence at Mordington-Castle."

"And is not that husband," resumed the Countess, with an air of sovereign contempt, "a fool of the first magnitude?"

"Whoever has conveyed to you, Lady Ennerdale, so unqualified an assertion, has done *him* the highest injustice, and grossly imposed upon *you*. Though not endowed with brilliant qualities, he is a man of honour and conduct. He is warm-hearted, and, as you must often have heard proclaimed in the country, liberal to the indigent, and hospitable to his equals. He admires, and knows how to distinguish

talents and merits, and the best company of both sexes is frequently to be met with at his table. Mrs. Somerville is the grace and ornament of these well-selected parties. She has a vivacity so tempered by softness, and an elegance and high-breeding so easy and natural, that her house possesses attractions which scarcely any other in town can boast."—

"And she has sisters, and cousins, who contribute in no small degree to heighten these attractions!—Was not that young lady one of them whom I saw with her upon the stairs?"—

"It was her youngest sister, Miss Cleveland."—

"And whither are they now gone? They did not pass me to quit the house, but seemed proceeding towards some of the upper rooms."—

"They are gone to visit Algernon."

"Humph!" ejaculated Lady Ennerdale, taking an immoderate pinch of snuff. "These are strange novelties, and this is a strange world! So violent a prepossession in favour of this Cleveland family, is one of the very last occurrences I should

have expected to have heard. Why do you not keep open house, Isabella, for them all?—For the General's wife, who wants to marry her son to your cousin Eudocia?—For the General himself, who wants to marry one of his daughters to my good Lord, here present?—And, above all, for this young Miss Cleveland's mother, who would be glad to marry her poor girl to any body?"—

"Miss Cleveland's mother?" repeated Lady Isabella—"I thought she had been dead."—

"Poor creature!—No; she is only dead to fame and honour!—Mr. Cleveland divorced her eighteen years ago. Her seducer married her, but she is now again a widow. I am informed, that this unfortunate descendant of her's, (who may, however, be a very deserving girl) receives no sort of countenance from Mr. Cleveland; and that she has been lately paying a visit of considerable length to her misguided mother."—

Lord Ennerdale, who saw by the countenance of Lady Isabella how unfavourably this discourse worked upon her, and read a species of consternation in every feature,

now earnestly said, addressing his mother in-law—

"And what, dear madam, could Miss Cleveland do better than pay this visit? It was sanctioned by many of her family; it was determined upon when her mother was in affliction and solitude; it was dictated by motives of duty, and certainly reflects nothing but credit upon her who undertook it."—

"Well, well, we will wave the subject. A daughter, under such circumstances, is in a most pitiable predicament. If she neglects her parent, it proves that she has no heart; if she associates with her, she incurs the hazard of reviving recollections that may be disadvantageous to herself.—But let the matter rest.—Lord Ennerdale, you make no enquiries after your sister."

"Where is she, Madam?"—

"In our way up to town, we paid a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Bellamont, intending merely to sleep there one night, and to proceed on our journey the following day. But my young companion was enticed from me for a longer period, and I was persuaded to leave her with the

Bellamonts till they come up to town themselves."—

"And how soon will that happen?"

"It depends upon circumstances. Mr. Bellamont's son is shortly coming of age, and great preparations are making to celebrate the event with all imaginable festivity. Eudocia was tempted by the gay prospect, to give up for a time the attractions of London, and it is possible she may be detained till the middle of next month."

Her ladyship then enquired what were her daughter's engagements for the day, and invited herself to dinner.

Lady Isabella said she should be most happy to receive her; but added, with some confusion, that Miss Cleveland was at present her guest.

When the circumstance had been more fully explained—

"Well," said the Countess, after a short pause, "I will, notwithstanding, if you are disposed to admit me, join your party.—During a dinner visit, I may be able to penetrate a little into this Miss Cleveland's character;—and every passing moment renders me more and more solicitous to dis-

cover the real motive of that problematical benevolence which she is exercising towards my family."—

She then took her leave.

During some minutes, a profound silence succeeded her departure. Lady Isabella was the first to break it.

"How vexatious to the feelings, and harassing to the spirits," cried she, "are the endless diversities of opinion one is constrained to admit of this whole Cleveland confederacy!"

Much offended at such an expression, Lord Ennerdale gravely said—

"This is language, Lady Isabella, which I hope, for the credit of your own heart, you have no design to apply to Mrs. Somerville, or to her kind sister!"

"It is true," resumed her ladyship, "that I witness in them both nothing but what appears in the highest degree amiable and meritorious;—yet, it is equally true, that I hear of them, except from you, nothing but what is equivocal and suspicious. Where individual opinion thus clashes with public estimation, what standard have we to go by?"

"The standard of reason and justice, my dear sister. Attend to *facts* rather than to *rumours*, and, if you consider them impartially, you will always find that they are the safest as well as the most equitable guides by which to fix a wavering judgment. But, Isabella," pursued he, with some agitation, "detain not Miss Cleveland under your roof whilst your thoughts of her are in so fluctuating a state. Your countenance will betray your internal indecision; you will regard her with alternate coldness and affection; you will deeply wound a spirit which, whether you finally discover to be selfish or liberal, it would in *us*, at least, be unpardonable ingratitude to afflict."

"I should be truly reluctant abruptly to part with her," resumed Lady Isabella, "since, when left to myself, I feel the strongest disposition to love her, and the most perfect reliance on her artlessness.—Would I had never heard any thing to her prejudice!—I need not," added she, with a conscious smile, "acknowledge to *you*, that I am deficient in that vigour of mind, and confidence in my own discernment, which might preserve me from the torment of

being thus perpetually unhinged in all my sentiments by every opposing breath."

Lord Ennerdale found it impossible to forbear smiling also at an avowal which, however candid, was, at least in the present instance, so completely superfluous. But before he could make any reply to it, Mrs. Somerville and Adela entered the room; and presently after, a succession of visitors poured in upon Lady Isabella, and held her engaged till nearly dinner time.

When her sister, still attended by Lord Ennerdale, walked back to Cumberland Place, Adela sought refuge from a concourse of strangers, wholly uninteresting to her, above stairs, and devoted herself entirely to young Ossely. She read to him; she invented little quiet games that brought into use the toys Mrs. Somerville had supplied him with; she sung nursery songs to him; she told him stories of her two little nieces, and of a very, *very* good boy, a cousin of theirs, who sometimes came to play with them;—in short, she so successfully ingratiated herself in his favour, so highly entertained him, yet so considerately spared his tender spirits, that when Dr. R. paid his

professional visit, he addressed to her the most flattering compliments upon her talents both as a nurse and a companion, and declared that the child could not possibly have been going on more completely to his satisfaction:

"I wish," added he, "I could command as skilful a coadjutor in half the sick rooms I am summoned to attend. Your face indeed, might do a good deal of mischief amongst some of my more inflammable patients; but that is a risk worth running, and would be well compensated by the beneficial effects you could not fail to produce upon the desponding, whom you would cheer,—the irritable whom you would sooth,—and the torpid, whom you would vivify."

"Many of these are effects, Doctor," said Adela, "which you might, where flattery is balsamic, produce yourself. What patient could remain insensible to compliments so well turned, if you chose but to administer them with your less palatable prescriptions!"

"A physician, my dear young lady, who understands his trade, never flatters his patients till they begin to be convalescents.

A bed of pain or danger, is no place where either men or women will listen with satisfaction to eloquent declamation, even though that declamation possesses the additional charm of being directed to the praise of their own perfections. The eloquence of looks is all that

———' Sickly ears,
' Deaf'd with the clamour of their own dear groans,'

will gratefully attend to;—and in these you are better qualified to succeed than any orator in the British dominions."

He then, more seriously, conversed for a few minutes, on the subject of the invalid; left some general directions with Margaret, and making his bow to Adela, departed.

The house being at length cleared of morning company, Lady Isabella, tired to death, and protesting that she would never again suffer such a number of people to be admitted, joined her young guest, and announced to her the addition they were to have, in the person of her mother, to their dinner-party. Had she been judicious enough to stop there, it had been well: but she needlessly entered into particulars extremely unpleasant to her auditress, and

which very ill disposed her to anticipate Lady Ennerdale's arrival with satisfaction. She recounted by way of preparing Adela for cold looks, the anger with which her mother had learnt the expulsion of Manby; and even alluded, but too intelligibly, to the displeasure which she had, on that account, conceived against Mrs. Somerville:

"But, my dear Miss Cleveland," added she, "you must not be disturbed by any appearance of reserve which you may remark in her. She is a most excellent, and, in reality, a benevolent character. Some painful circumstances, you know, have occurred, which render her not quite so friendly as I could wish to certain individuals of your family, and she may, just at first, regard you with less cordiality than you deserve. But before the day is over, I trust that on her part, all shyness will wear away, and that on yours, its previous symptoms will be forgiven."

Adela, concealing her vexation at this communication as well as she was able, made to it scarcely any answer; but instantly resolved to summon to her aid all the presence of mind and all the tranquil

sobriety of demeanour which she could command, to ward off from the prejudiced visitor the sightest temptation to any incivility distressing either to her feelings or her pride.

She considered that, unsupported by any of her own connections, she was on the point of being in the presence of one to whom her brother had rendered himself obnoxious by his duel with Lord Ennerdale, and whom Mrs. Somerville had undesignedly irritated by her recent interference in the affair of the nurse. Personally she had given the austere countess no cause of offence; yet she was taught to expect so frigid a reception, that already chilled by it, and half dismayed, she thought it absolutely necessary to form a deliberate system of conduct which should afford to enmity no advantage over her, by the display either of levity of carriage, childish timidity, or affected defiance.

Impressed with a full sense of the propriety of thus acting, she appeared at table in a character wholly new, and under an aspect differing so completely from any that Lord Ennerdale or the master and mistress

of the house had ever seen her wear, that they could scarcely believe her to be the same individual. Her countenance had assumed no character of exaggerated solemnity, but its expression had all at once seemed to mature; it was just as serene, as unassuming as it had been in the morning—but it was five years older! It announced a degree of steadiness and self-possession which would have put insolence itself out of countenance; yet all its native modesty remained uninjured, and though its vivacity was obscured, sweetness and understanding were conspicuous in every look.

Lady Ennerdale was not prepared for an encounter with one whose manners were so little open to criticism—in whom such guarded but simple propriety was apparent; and the disappointment—for to the ill-inclined it is doubtless a disappointment to discover nothing that can be censured—confounded, and nearly reduced her to silence. Mr. Annesley was the only person at table with whom she occasionally conversed; Lord Ennerdale, engaged in cautiously observing Adela, scarcely spoke himself; Lady Isabella, though at first struck by the change in her

fair inmate, presently became accustomed to it, and wearied by the morning's exertions, grew languid, and seemed thoroughly averse from making any further effort to appear agreeable. To Adela, the dowager reluctant as she would have been to acknowledge it, wanted courage to address herself. She watched her incessantly, but wholly by stealth. She wondered at her own backwardness to speak to her with the same freedom which she had been accustomed to use towards other young people. She felt peevish and ill at ease, yet knew not where to rest the blame, nor how the inquisitorial purpose of her visit was so unaccountably baffled.

When the ladies rose from table, Adela went up to take leave for the night of little Algernon.

He had just been assisted to rise in order to have his bed made, and wrapt in a large shawl, was sitting upon Margaret's lap.

At sight of his young friend, his eyes sparkled, and stretching forth his arms, he begged her to take him. She complied, and when he was comfortably established, put-

ting his mouth close to her ear, he cautiously whispered—

"Where is nurse Manby?"

Adela scarcely knew whether it was adviseable immediately to answer this question with full unreserve, and therefore, after a moment's hesitation, said,

"Your papa has given her leave to go and see some of her friends."

"Will she be away a great while?"

"Do you wish her to come back soon, Algernon?"

His complexion varied, and his expressive eyes spoke the deepest resentment, whilst passionately he answered—

"No—I never wish her to come back at all—I hate her!"

"Was she then, my poor little boy, so very, very unkind to you?"

"She said, papa told her to use me so ill-naturedly—but I don't believe it now, for he is very good to me, and don't beat me, and shut me up as she did!—Do *you* think he bid her do it?"

Adela's eyes filled with tears, and pressing the wan and feeble little complainer to her bosom, she answered with much emo-

tion—"No, my Algernon; I am *sure* he did not. He loves you tenderly, and wishes to see you happy, and will do every thing in his power to make you so.—But now, dear boy, talk and think of something else, and do not thus agitate yourself. Nurse Manby is far away, and very likely you may never see her again."—

"Then," said the child, gradually recovering his serenity, "tell me some more stories about your little nieces, and their cousin Willy. When papa came up to see me, whilst you were dressing for dinner, I asked him if it was all true what you had told me about them, and if he would ever let me go and see them? And he said yes; and he said how very good it was of you to sit by me so long, and play with me, and tell me amusing stories; and he asked me if I did not love you very, very much?"

"And what did you say to that, dear Algernon?"

"I said," answered he, throwing his arms round her neck, "that I loved you dearly—better, almost, than any body in the whole world!"

"And did your papa like that answer?"—

"Yes,—for he kissed me directly."

Adela, smiling, kissed him too; and then inquired who were the persons she *almost* rivalled in his affection?

"Did you ever," cried he, "see my aunt Eudocia?"

"No, never."

"Oh, she is very good-natured, and very merry; I wish you knew her."—

A little bustle at the door now drew their attention towards it, and presently Lady Ennerdale entered, preceded by her daughter, who came up as her conductress.

Adela bowed as she sat, but paused a few minutes before she resigned her charge, less from any desire to witness the interview, than from unwillingness to appear anxious to shun the dowager's company.

Algernon, at sight of his grandmother, who he knew was in the house, and therefore beheld without emotion, testified neither gladness nor sorrow, but received her with the most tepid indifference, and shewed the strongest disinclination, when Adela arose to depart, to accept in compensation for her loss, the society of her venerable substitute.

CHAP. V.

CONFESSION.

In deference to Lady Ennerdale, her two sons-in-law spent the whole evening at home. No visitors were admitted, and nothing was wanting to render this domestic party sociable except a genuine disposition to feel so. But "all appliances and means to boot" may be furnished to produce cordiality, yet, if the spirit rebels, they are totally unavailing. The mere ceremony of assembling in the same room, and calling each other mother and daughter, cousin and brother, effects but little. Ease and intimacy are so far from being inseparably attached to nearness of kindred, that in the whole circle of creation, nothing can surpass the heaviness and restraint which is often seen (where the principal individuals exact too much) pervading, "in clouded majesty," a family party.—

After tea, and about half an hour before her carriage was announced, Lady Ennerdale, resolving not to be utterly foiled, approached the little table at which Adela was

working, and lingering near it for some time without speaking, at length sat down, and said—

"You have been very attentive and kind, Ma'am, to my young grandson above stairs, and we ought all to feel greatly obliged to you."—

To this, no other answer seemed requisite than a civil inclination of the head—

"I suppose, Ma'am, you are vastly fond of children?"

"Yes, in general I like them extremely."—

"You have wonderfully succeeded, on so short an acquaintance, in winning the regard of little Algernon, and I am sure his father is infinitely indebted to you and Mrs. Somerville for the anxiety you have shewn concerning him."—

"Mrs. Somerville has children of her own, and therefore feels a lively interest for the children of others."—

"And you, Miss Cleveland? What motive instigated you to so much solicitude?"

Adela fancied that this question was asked with a lurking sneer—at least, with a design to embarrass, and involve her in some

foolish evasion. The idea offended her, and the offence gave her courage to look up, and composedly to answer—

"I was induced to remain here from a very sincere desire to alleviate the disquietude of Lady Isabella, and also from a disposition to gratify the wishes of Mr. and Mrs. Somerville, by performing at such a time of distress, every service in my power for the son of their friend, Lord Ennerdale."—

"Upon my word," said her Ladyship, dryly, "Lord Ennerdale is a most fortunate man!"

"He will not think so whilst his little boy is in any danger."—

"Can you suspect him of such insensibility to your extraordinary benevolence?"

Adela again raised her eyes from her work, and with the most petrifying coldness, answered,

"I shall be in this house but a very short time longer; my motives for remaining in it, I have frankly acknowledged;—yet, even if your Ladyship discredits them, I am entitled, as the guest of your daughter,

to hope that you will spare me any insinuations that may lead me to regret having ever consented to become such."—

This

> ———— "grave rebuke,
> "Severe in youthful beauty,"

seemed completely to disconcert her suspicious interrogator. Adela added nothing to it, either by look or word, but again bending her head over her work, sat anticipating with secret dread what was likely to come next.

The two gentlemen, who, during this little dialogue, had hovered as near her as they dared venture without offending Lady Ennerdale, now, by mutual but tacit consent, approached her chair, and almost in the same breath, entreated that she would give them a little music.—

Very grateful for the relief of this timely application afforded her, she immediately arose; the piano-forte was opened for her, and with greater pleasure than she had ever felt from her own performance before, she continued playing, till the Countess, who seemed in no disposition to be "moved with concord of sweet sounds," rang to en-

quire for her carriage, and hearing it was arrived, took her leave.

The hour that intervened between her exit and the moment of retiring, was the most gratifying to Adela, of any which she had yet passed in Portman Square.

She was just released from the irksome restraint imposed upon her by the presence of the newly-departed guest; she found herself an object of the most flattering distinction to the two gentlemen who remained; Lord Ennerdale was in better spirits than she had seen him in since his son's arrival in town; Mr. Annesley displayed all the gaiety of a school-boy at a breaking-up; and Lady Isabella, good-humoured, though versatile, participated in the general animation. Not a word was said relating to their recent visitor; none but the most enlivening subjects were started; each individual spoke from the genuine impulse of the moment, and all was frankness, and unembarrassed vivacity.

The watchman's voice 'the boding cry,' as Mr. Annesley called it, under the window, announcing twelve o'clock, was the signal

which Lady Isabella compelled herself to give for retreating. She acknowledged that it mortified her to break up so comfortable a little party;—" but consider," added she, " how late Miss Cleveland went to bed last night."

" It is too true," said her brother; " we therefore must not be so selfish as to detain her—yet, how can we bear to part with her?"

" Oh, *the horror of the last!*" exclaimed Mr. Annesley, " how I hate the last hour of a friendly day, or, as in this case, the last minute of a friendly hour!"

" You would have more sympathisers in your second object of aversion than in your first," said Adela, " since every body seems to value with greater spirit the society which can only be obtained for a short interval, than that which can be leisurely possessed to-day, to-morrow, the next day, and the next."—

" You do not intend, I hope, to assert this as a truth without exceptions?" said Lord Ennerdale, smiling—" I could mention individuals in whose society I never would have trusted myself at all, had I con-

ceived it probable that I enjoyed it for so limited a portion of time."—

"Very true," cried Mr. Annesley; "we may delight in a splendid show, a witty anecdote, or a fanciful tale, in proportion perhaps to their brevity: but the intercourse we hold with a living favourite, increases in value from our reliance upon its permanence."—

"And so now, that we have both, with so little ceremony, controverted the soundness of your doctrine," resumed the Earl, taking Adela's hand, "good night—and be assured that the courage with which we bear this separation, results solely from our hope of meeting you again to-morrow."

"And good night, "re-echoed Mr. Annesley, seizing the hand that remained disengaged—"We shall never trust to any of your theories, till you teach us to think it a light evil to be parted from you."

They both accompanied her to the door, each kissed the hand he held, and reluctantly suffered her to retire. Lady Isabella, laughing at their gallantry, quitted the room at the same moment.

"That charming girl," said Mr. Annes-

ley, as he walked back to the table, "has the most perfect manners, and, with the quickest feelings, the nicest judgment, I ever met with in any female whatever!"

"Make sure," cried Lord Ennerdale, laughing, "that your wife is out of hearing! What think you she would say to so fervent an ebullition of praise?"

"That I wanted some of the sober stoicism of her philosophic brother! Why, a frozen anchorite, or the rigid Lady Ennerdale herself, would scarcely have listened to me with more profound insensibility! Yet, surely, you cannot have been blind to her conduct through this trying day?—Could any thing be more delicately circumspect, more unaffectedly dignified? Would it have been possible for age, ugliness, austerity, and haughtiness—every repulsive attribute combined, to have kept at bay more effectually a keenly-watchful observer, armed cap-à-pie for hostility, than with youth, sweetness, and modesty, this admirable creature contrived so long to evade from our solemn guest, the slightest pretext to an attack?"

Lord Ennerdale made no immediate an-

swer to this animated appeal: but with an air of irresolution—a heightened complexion, and an evident appearance of agitation, kept his eyes stedfastly fixed on the ground.

Mr. Annesley surprised at his silence, and struck by the singular expression of his countenance, put his hand upon his shoulder, and regarding him with a smile, called out in a loud voice, "*awake, arise,* and communicate your dreams!"

Starting at this invocation, and recovering all his energy—

"Can you, Annesley," cried he, "keep a friend's counsel?"

"Try me."—

"Then hear me acknowledge—nay, more, —hear me exult in declaring, that I love this Adela Cleveland better than my own existence!—She shall be mine, dear Annesley, in defiance of every obstacle—I had almost said, in defiance even of herself!—She has no reciprocal passion for me now—but she *shall* have—for I will not let her rest till she admits me to as distinguished a place in her own heart, as she has obtained in mine!"—

"Heroically resolved, my most noble cousin!" exclaimed Mr. Annesley, laughing

heartily, yet much gratified by the frankness of this unexpected avowal—

"I honour your spirit—and very sincerely wish success to your cause!—But—(for in every thing there is an *if* or a *but* of much virtue, or much malignancy)—but what mean you to do with the father and brother of this lovely girl?—How purpose you to propitiate them?"

"Of her brother," answered the Earl, "as I do not desire to live in a perpetual state of irritation, I make it a rule to think as little as possible. It is my firm hope, that he possesses no serious influence over Adela's mind, and will be permitted to rave unheeded against whatever she may deliberately resolve to perform. The father, my dear Annesley, I certainly should distrust with great alarm, did I not know that, however cheap we may in theory affect to hold them, there is in rank and affluence a conveniently mollifying power, capable of disarming the stoutest opposition, and of softening the most stubborn inflexibility. Mr. Cleveland, though it is indubitable that, as Algernon Mordington, he would have rejected me, is not, I trust, so mag-

nanimous a bigot to his antipathies, as to refuse for his daughter what I am now enabled to offer—a title, and a corresponding settlement."

"And, meanwhile, you have in Somerville as zealous and bustling a well-wisher as heart could desire!"

"He often, I suspect, with the most friendly intentions in the world, hurts my cause. His open adherence, his unguarded loquacity, embarrass and shock the too-sensitive Adela, and fill her with groundless fears of being thought a party in his sanguine wishes. If she knew how much more justly I understand her character—if she was sensible how much greater is my dread of her lofty disinterestedness, than my remotest disposition to suspect her of design, she would dismiss these causeless panics, and give to my secret hope of attaching her a happier chance of success."

"If Somerville's officiousness, which I own appears to me preposterous, likewise annoys you, why do you hesitate to recommend to him greater caution?"

"How can I bear to silence, or run the risk of offending, my only advocate in her

family? Adela is so beautiful, so unhackneied in the London world, and, under the auspices of her charming sister, appears in it to such advantage, that there can be little doubt Somerville might very speedily have the gratification of seeing her distinguished by men in all respects my equals or superiors. The easy and habitual access which he grants to me at his house, is of incalculable importance to me. Exclusive of the opportunities with which it furnishes me of daily seeing his sister, I consider it as the most promising means of distancing other pretenders: for, with all my boasted security of the influence which nobility and wealth may give me with her father, there breathes not the humblest commoner, unincumbered with children, whose attentions I could behold without dismay, and whose assiduities she might not think it wiser to encourage. True, she has behaved to my boy with a tenderness surpassing all description—yet, how must she love me ere she consents to become that boy's mother!"

"Pshaw, pshaw, Ennerdale! She knows that in accepting a man of fortune, though he may have children by a first marriage, she

incurs none of the penalties entailed upon stepdames in vulgar life. She will never have the office of teaching them their horn-book—of doling out to them their scanty pittance of meat and pudding—nor of patching and repairing their thread-bare garments. It will be a nominal maternity, attended with no weighty duties: twice or thrice a day, Algernon and Harriet may be admitted to the honour of her presence, while she sits at her toilet, or sips her wine at dessert; and this is nearly all that, for many years, her connection with them will prescribe. I allow, that were she ever to have a son herself, she might experience some mortification at his exclusion from the title and estate: but would it not be high treason to suspect, that young ladies, immediately on receiving a proposal of marriage, begin meditating with such premature solicitude on the destiny of their future offspring!"

"At all events, my dear Annesley, I would wish that what has passed between us on this subject may at present go no further;—especially, be upon your guard before Lady Isabella. She is constantly well

intentioned, and, left to the bias of her own feelings, would treat Adela and her sister with the most grateful affection: but a word dropped in her presence, of Somerville's suspected projects. . ."

"My good fellow," interrupted Mr. Annesley, "I will honestly confess, that these prudential recommendations are delivered a little too late!—With something worse than indiscretion, I have already infused into Isabella a spirit of suspicion which it would be no easy matter to allay. Your Adela was the subject of a long conference between us in our way to Lady Sarah Farnham's. I meant her no injury, but the folly of poor Somerville relating to the masquerade, provoked me to speak both of him and his lovely sister, with far less caution than I have since wished that I had used. This morning, Isabella's countenance was a mirror that palpably reflected the ghosts of these rashly conjured-up distrusts: she looked chilled and miserable; every attempt at a smile went off with the faint flash of a damp sky-rocket; and more than once, I was in terror lest our pretty guest should suddenly start up, and run out of the house!"

"Did she, then, betray great susceptibility of your wife's cold and altered manner?"

"She betrayed it, not by peevish accents, flushed cheeks, or angry glances, but by a grave civility, so formal and so laconic, that it as much overawed poor Isabella, as it would have puzzled me to account for, had I not felt responsible for being its original cause.—Now, perhaps, you are somewhat inquisitive to know, what rendered me so early a penitent for the mischief my loquacity had occasioned. The fact is, I was tempted, after quitting Lady Sarah's, to look in for half an hour at Mrs. Ormsby's masquerade. I attached myself, from the moment I entered the room, to Adela's side, in the unsuspected guise of a friar. Her simplicity, her quiet delicacy of deportment amidst the many audible and flattering tributes that were paid to the graces of her person—and above all, the genuine good humour and good sense with which she supported certain figurative allusions which I made to her circumstances, sent me home the most decided convert to her perfect and undesigning worth."

"Her disposition," said Lord Ennerdale, charmed by this cordial praise, "brings back to my remembrance, as it gradually unfolds itself to my observation, so many of the traits, which, in her childhood, gave indications of a noble and ingenuous spirit, and of a temper the most pacific and grateful, that I often wonder how, for so many intervening years, I could endure to live without beholding her.—But, as a boy, though I was, to a certain degree, conscious of her superior qualities, I was not touched by them, I did not *feel* their uncommon value in the forcible manner I do now. Yet, the impression which they left upon my mind is such, that every good propensity I discern in her, seems but the re-appearance, in a more matured state, of some early excellence with which I was formerly acquainted; and never strikes me either with the surprise attendant upon novelty, or the mistrust accompanying a doubtful discovery. Adela's mind is, to me, like a book once learnt by heart, but afterwards lost sight of, and nearly forgotten;—every page, as I re-peruse it, recurs familiarly to my memory, and brings back the liveliest recollection

not only of its own contents, but of the time and place when they were first studied, and of the circumstances under which they were so warmly admired. I love thus to recall the impressions I received during some of the happiest years of my life. Her eye is the same as ever; the cast of her features is nearly unaltered—and she has occasional looks—I have traced now and then a smile, or caught an accent so like the look, the smile, the accent of Adela Cleveland in those days of wild and unchecked glee, that I almost fancy myself transported into the fields of Devonshire, and wish for nothing so much as to be restored to the privileges and intimacy which then subsisted between us."

"This is loving her," cried Mr. Annesley, "as you would an old spinning-top, or a gingerbread alphabet!—There is no passion, no enthusiasm in such love as this!—A girl like Adela, deserves to be adored for what she is *now*, not for the gambols you associate with her remembrance when she was a child."

"Will nothing satisfy you," said Lord

Ennerdale, laughing, "but '*groans that thunder love, and sighs of fire?*'—Why may not a little friendship mix itself with my attachment? Think you its permanence will be injured by such a union? Or why should gratitude be wholly excluded from the confederacy?—Never shall I forget the impression that was made upon me by beholding her—(just returned from a scene of the gayest revelry, her person still arrayed in the most brilliant decorations, but her countenance, pure, composed, and ingenuous as that of an angel)—asleep by my smiling boy, unspoilt by the adulation to which she had been listening, unmindful of her accustomed accommodations, and, whilst the voice of flattery must still have sounded in her ear, and fatigue weighed heavy on her eyelids, anxious only, to visit, to sooth, and indulge a suffering child!—My dear Annesley, what father could have witnessed such a sight unmoved?"

"Why no father who loved either the child or the lady!—But what are your prospects of success with her?—You have seen her almost daily since she resided at the

Somervilles:—Are you upon promising grounds?—Are you well convinced she has no other prepossession?"

"Touch not upon that string, I beseech you—It makes most discordant music in my soul!—There is a son of General Cleveland's, absent now, thank Heaven! from London, whose influence over her I have been taught to dread with shuddering suspicion!—I can endure her present indifference—I can submit, whilst I behold her treating others with equal insensibility, to the apparent unconcern with which she receives my own attentions: but I do not think I could, without madness, bear to see her encouraging a rival!—Let us not talk of it—All my insecure visions of felicity vanish at the hateful idea!—How could you have the heart to conjure up, for my night's companions, such gloomy and threatening images?"

"Drown them in a full bumper!" cried Mr. Annesley, approaching the supper-tray, and pouring out for himself and the earl a glass of wine—"There is not a more certain exorcist of evil thoughts than Bacchus.—Here's a health to your lovely mistress—and may she speedily prove as kind as she is fair!"

Soon after, the two gentlemen, mutually satisfied with the openness with which each had treated the other, parted for the night.

CHAP. VI.

EXHORTATIONS.

DURING breakfast the next morning, Lady Isabella, who still appeared in high good-humour with her guest, invited her to be of the party when she went out in the carriage. Adela readily agreed to the proposal, totally forgetting, for the moment, the visit impending over her from Jemima; and she pressed for the indulgence, before they returned home, of a walk in Kensington Gardens—

"If either of our beaux will contrive to meet us there," said her ladyship, "I shall delight in such a scheme: but I own, I have not courage for it, dear Miss Cleveland, *téte-à-téte* with you. Does Mrs. Somerville ever venture thither without a male escort, or a party?"

"We have walked there two or three

times," said Adela, "with the nurse and children."—

"Oh, nurses and children are the securest companions in the world. But as we have none here whom we can engage in our service, one of these gentlemen must positively become our esquire, or we must solicit Mrs. Somerville to lend us her own guards."

Lord Ennerdale, who knew that the old countess, whilst she was in town, made it a constant practice to walk in Kensington Gardens every day, hung back from offering his services, unwilling, in the present situation of affairs, to draw observation upon Adela by shewing himself too assiduous to attend her.

Mr. Annesley, finding him resolute not to speak, at length supplied the deficiency. His tardily-proffered attendance was accepted, and every thing seemed satisfactorily arranged, when Adela, half-laughing at her own want of memory, suddenly exclaimed—

"My dear Lady Isabella, I am quite ashamed of the trouble I have given you in settling this scheme—but I have just recollected that it is impossible for me to go."

"Oh, I perfectly understand what all this means!" cried Mr. Annesley, with affected reproach—"you don't like *me* for your beau, Miss Cleveland."—

"I must not like any body for my beau," said Adela; "nor must I even venture to stir from the house. I have been drawn into taking a great liberty, Lady Isabella, and am under an engagement to receive here this morning, a young relation of mine, who, although totally unknown to you, insists upon paying me a visit."—

She then spoke of the note that had been addressed to her the preceding day, apologizing for not having mentioned it sooner, and ascribing the omission to its true cause,—her having completely forgotten its reception.

"How impossible it is not to envy the supremely fortunate correspondent," cried Mr. Annesley, "of whose innoxious qualities so undeniable a proof is afforded!"

"Do you think," said Lord Ennerdale, turning to Adela with a smile, "that your cousin would be much gratified by hearing this species of merit attributed to her?"

"You really must decide that question yourself," answered she;—"you know her sufficiently to be perfectly capable of doing it without any assistance."—

Lady Isabella, having now come to a decision, said—

"I hope, my dear Miss Cleveland, you will not be offended, if I leave you to receive this young lady by yourself? Independently of the reluctance I always feel to enlarge my acquaintance unnecessarily, I really have some visits to pay which ought not to be delayed."—

"Nothing will so much reconcile me to my own imprisonment," answered Adela, "as the assurance that you will impose upon yourself no restraint, Lady Isabella, on my visitor's account."—

At two o'clock, which was earlier than she intended, Lady Isabella, anxious to escape before Jemima's arrival, entered her carriage, and drove from the door.

Adela spent nearly the whole morning in the nursery: but concluding, as was usual from breakfast till dinner, that the two gentlemen were both out, she went down about two hours after Lady Isabella's departure,

to ring for a servant, and to send him on a message to Cumberland Place.

In the first room she entered, she found Lord Ennerdale reading, and alone.

"Is your visitor gone," cried he, closing his book, "or not yet arrived?"

Adela, suppressing an *alas!* answered—"not yet arrived. But morning visits in London are paid at hours which would make them evening visits in the country."—

She then asked him if he had been long returned from his ride?"

"I am but just come in," replied he.

"Then you did not see Dr. R—. ?"

"No: is his opinion of the progress of Algernon's amendment, as favourable as it was yesterday?"

"I have great pleasure in being the first to tell you, that he allows his little patient to sit up to-day for some hours; and that to-morrow, perhaps, or on Friday, at furthest, he promises to withdraw the interdict that prevented his removal to my sister's."—

"This is, indeed, a most cheering report.—Yet, dearest Miss Cleveland, how

true it is, that scarcely any good betides us here, unmixed with some counterbalancing evil!"

"Why, what can be your quarrel, Lord Ennerdale, with the good I have now communicated to you?"

"Have you no suspicion," cried he, looking at her rather archly, "that I should be willing to quarrel with any communication that taught me to anticipate your departure from this house?"—

"I must have been vain indeed," cried Adela, "to imagine that you would dignify with the name of an evil, the trivial circumstance of my removal from this street into the next."—

"I will not be admonished into retracting the term!—It *will* be an evil to me, no longer to behold you a guest amongst my own connections; it gave us a sort of property in you, the deprivation of which we shall all sensibly lament.—Besides—there is a social and an intimate pleasure in those stated hours of meeting the friends we reside under the same roof with, which belongs not to the interviews obtained merely by short and hurried visits. Be-

fore strangers are admitted at the beginning of the day, how pleasant it is to assemble round the breakfast table, and address our first sentence, as we the night before addressed our last, to the individuals who form our own little world—our distinct and dearest circle!—I hate to hear men say, they require no other companion at breakfast than a newspaper.—Let me, on the contrary, see collected round the table, a select but permanent little band of cheerful morning faces, each with his scheme for the day, or his last night's dream to recount—and each looking rejoiced to behold the other."—

"You have drawn a delightful picture of domestic comfort," cried Adela, with feelings fully responsive to his own, "and must sometimes come and see it realized in Cumberland Place. My sister, Mr. Somerville, and I, as often assemble, I think, with these sentiments of mutual good-will, as any people in London."—

"And would not an interloper, one who belongs not of right to the party, in a great measure put them to flight?"

"You know too well the high degree of

friendship with which they regard you, seriously to ask the question."—

"*They* regard me, I gratefully admit, with the most encouraging kindness;—but how would *you*, individually, feel at my intrusion?"

"Oh, so shocked," answered she, laughing, "that as you entered the room at one door, I should infallibly make my exit at the other!"

"I own, I have no apprehension of any symptom of antipathy quite so outrageous; —but I will tell you what I *do* dread.—A face of tepid civility—a silent bow—an air of indifference whether I enter or depart. These would be worse to me, a thousand degrees, than an abrupt flight from my presence—they would manifest nothing but apathy,—the other I might attribute to my power of raising some sort of emotion. Now, you will allow, that there is sufficient humility in saying, that I should be satisfied with the exchange of aversion for that of total disregard!"

"Indeed there is!" cried Adela, colouring, "but have I ever been guilty of thus appearing to consider yo—?"

"My dearest Miss Cleveland," cried he, taking her hand, "these reproaches, after all the exquisite goodness you have shewn to my sick boy—after the generous sacrifice you have made of your time to Isabella's comfort, are ungrateful and encroaching!—But the truth is, that previous to your visit here, I sometimes thought you disposed to treat me with less—what term shall I use? May I say, with less cordiality, than my feelings demanded?" Your charming sister, though her acquaintance with me has been of far shorter date than yours, invariably shewed me greater friendship and interest. I was often tempted to think, that *she* was the Adela I had once lived with, and won to love me, and that *you* were the sister to whom I was comparatively a stranger. Yet, think not that I presume to complain with anger; in the first place, you have redeemed these mortifying slights, by your recent kindness; and in the next, I fervently trust, that unless I bring upon myself the penalty by some unpardonable misdemeanour, you will never resume the distant and reserved air, which, during these last two happy days, ... to my joy, cast off."

The feeling look and voice with which this speech was uttered, as well as its general purport, affected Adela more than she wished to betray; yet she could not bear to appear wholly insensible to what she had been hearing, and after a moment's hesitation, gently withdrawing her hand, she answered—

"I am very sorry to have incurred the slightest suspicion of having been deficient in those friendly feelings which my sister has so frankly manifested.—Under similar circumstances, perhaps, I should have given you as little cause to accuse me of reserve as she has: but the social confidence which, in her, was sanctioned by her husband, in me was repelled by the fear that it might not be sanctioned by my father. But from this time, I will endeavour to adapt my conduct more to your wishes—for nothing would give me greater concern, than to seem obstinately regardless of your exhortations."

"These exhortations, as you term them, you have borne with so much sweetness, that I almost hate myself for having tormented you with them."—

A carriage just then drove up to the door, which Adela perceived to be Mrs. Cleveland's.—

"Here, at length," cried she, "is my expected visitor. Now will you, Lord Ennerdale, to make me some amends for the lecture you have been giving me, assist me to receive and entertain her?"

"I would much sooner," answered he, laughing, "begin immediately to give you another lecture for making such a proposal!"—

He then, more seriously, entreated that she would receive her cousin in the adjoining room, and deliberately resumed his book.

Adela could scarcely reach the apartment of which he spoke, before Jemima, accompanied, to her great satisfaction, by the affectionate Christina, entered it by a different door. The one through which she had passed, slipped from her hand as she hastily advanced to meet them, and remained, though almost imperceptibly, unclosed.

"My dear Adela," cried Jemima, looking round with ill-disguised vexation, "have I

detained you at home quite alone to receive me?—How sorry I am to have come so late! but I could not procure the carriage sooner. Mamma has been out in it, and a hundred other things conspired to delay me. I suppose, Lady Isabella will only return home to dress for dinner?"

"Probably not; but she did not mention at what hour she would come back."—

"Has she been gone long?"

"I can scarcely tell," replied Adela, good-naturedly averse from mortifying her with the information of her ladyship's anxiety to escape the visit—"in London, I never know how time goes."—

"And here," resumed Jemima, "you have so many interesting occupations, that I imagine you are less sensible of its progress than any where else. Pray, how does your little patient go on?—I assure you, I begin myself to think, that your attention to him ought to be rewarded by the conquest of his father's heart!"

"How unlucky it is, then, that the child is already getting well, and that—deprived of all pretence to prolong those attentions—

I shall, to-morrow, make my bow to his whole family."—

"To-morrow do you go? My dear Adela, how little, then, has it been worth your while to come at all!—You have given rise to a thousand animadversions, and provoked a thousand sarcasms to answer no purpose in the world. You are the worst manager of a well-concerted project I ever met with in my life!"

"I wish," said Adela, "you would renounce the truly-mortifying practice, Jemima, of so continually attributing to design almost every accidental event that occurs.—I really believe, you are one of those who think that hardly any woman 'takes her tea without a stratagem.'—It would be illiberal to say, you judge of others by yourself—yet, do you not a little deserve to be told so?"

"You used to hear every thing of this kind with the most perfect indifference. How does it happen, my dear cousin, that you now take the matter so much more to heart?"

"I am provoked to find," resumed Adela, "that all my disclaiming assurances are so

unjustly discredited—and to say the truth, I am also completely tired of the subject. I could often wish, when I see you preparing to attack me, that I never had known Lord Ennerdale;—though, even in that case, such is your promptness to entertain suspicion, that you would find out somebody else to torment me about."—

"Oh, nothing can be more certain!" cried the attentively-listening Christina—"she positively declared last night, when mamma was wondering my brother had only written to us once, that she had no doubt he wrote to *you* by every post!"

"Writes to me!" repeated Adela—"Surely, Jemima, you could never have such an idea?"

Here their conference was suddenly interrupted, by seeing the door which communicated with the next room, softly closed, and the lock turned on the other side by an invisible hand.

"We have had an auditor, I am afraid," cried Adela, in a low voice—

"Who was it?" eagerly demanded Jemima—"not Lord Ennerdale?"

"Even Lord Ennerdale in person,"

"Is Mr. Annesley there too?"

"No; he is out on horseback."

"So, then, my dear cousin, when we came, we interrupted a *tête-à-tête* between you and my lord!—That is the very room which you came out of to receive us. Ah, Adela, does this agree exactly with all your heroic professions of indifference? Is there no duplicity in so gravely pretending to slight a man with whom you hold these private conferences, and on whose account you deliberately make yourself the town-talk?"

Adela was disconcerted, and unable to parry a charge which seemed better grounded than any that Jemima had yet directed against her. She was silent for some moments, and then looking up with the best appearance of serenity she could command—

"My dear Jemima," she cried, "I must be content to let you draw what inferences you please from the circumstance of my having been in that room when you arrived. I could easily explain how it happened, but to what purpose?—Would you believe me?"

"Very possibly I might still have my doubts!—Incredulity is of a very stubborn

nature in some compositions, and words that do not correspond with facts are apt to produce but little conviction.—Good morning, Adela;—you see I intrude upon you as short a time as possible, now I am aware how much better you might be engaged!"

She then departed, full of resentment, not only against Adela, but against Lord Ennerdale and Lady Isabella. Every view that brought her to the house was completely frustrated. The Earl's avoidance—though but in the adjacent apartment—and his sister-in-law's apparently premeditated absence, exasperated her beyond endurance: and the only consolation she carried from the door was, that just as her own carriage drove away, Lady Isabella's drew up, and she therefore felt assured that Adela's envied parley with the Earl could not be renewed.

CHAP. VII.

VACILLATION.

During dinner, Adela received a short note from Mrs. Somerville, in which that

lady stated, that her whole morning had been so much taken up by visitors, that she had not been able to command a moment to call in Portman Square: "but if Somerville," she added, "has any engagement for this evening, which is doubtful, for he has been very unwilling to forsake me whilst you have been absent, I will spend an hour or two with you after tea.—Adieu. Let me know whether Lady Isabella expects any company."

On being asked, her ladyship declared that she had every reason to believe they should be quite alone, and seemed much pleased, as well as her brother, at the prospect of adding Mrs. Somerville to their little party.

In the evening, however, contrary to expectation, four or five of Lady Isabella's friends, apprised that she had devoted herself to temporary seclusion on account of her nephew's indisposition, came to sit with her for an hour previous to their later engagements. Adela was unacquainted with any of the persons thus brought together. They consisted principally of young married women, like Lady Isabella of high

rank, but not like her of graceful good-breeding. On the contrary, the looks which they directed towards the unknown inmate, were, if not supercilious, at least far from courteous—if not insolent, at least sufficiently inquisitive almost to distress her.—Frequent whispers were addressed to Lady Isabella, of which it was palpable that she was the object; and so little did they seem disposed to consider her as a part of the company, that, as a resource against their unfeeling display of superiority, she drew forth her work, and retreated as far as she could, without rendering herself remarkable, from the haughty group.

Whilst thus detached, she was cheered by the approach of Lord Ennerdale, who drawing forward a chair, seated himself beside her.

"I hope," said he, "your departure to-morrow is not positively settled?"

"If your little Algernon," answered she, "has a good night, and is as well in the morning as he has been during the whole of this day, I believe that, after breakfast, my sister means to take us all—the nurse, the child, and myself, under her own care."

"Do you know, that I am very much tempted to go up and bribe Algernon to plead a restless night?"

"But how will you bribe me, after thus betraying yourself, to believe his plea?"

"There, I own, I should be puzzled; for what can compensate to you for longer renouncing your social home, and favourite pursuits?—Algernon, too—how infinitely better will he be situated at the admirable Mrs. Somerville's than he is here. He will be in the midst of lively and good-tempered companions of his own age; he will be immediately under your sister's experienced eye, and I hope from the temporary change of scene, every thing most beneficial to his health, mental and personal. You find, I am trying to persuade myself, since I cannot detain you, that it is better you should go;—but go when you may, dear Miss Cleveland, how can Lady Isabella, or my poor boy, to whom you have patiently devoted so many hours—*healing hours*, I may call them—how can they ever testify towards you, love and gratitude sufficient?"

"Their gratitude," said Adela, "I will generously dispense with; in truth, it is far

more due to my sister than to me—but their love, I shall be most sincerely rejoiced to possess."

"Algernon's heart you have won for ever; I question, indeed, whether you have now the shadow of a rival in it.—Lady Isabella is not demonstrative: but she has a feeling disposition, veiled as it sometimes is, under constitutional or habitual reserve. In England, it has often, and I begin to think, justly, been observed, that perfect correctness of conduct, and perfect purity of principle, are seldomer associated in your sex with the frankness of deportment and countenance that would heighten their attraction, than in any other country upon the globe. If you have ever considered the subject, tell me, why is it, that a true-born native of this Island, so often seems unwilling to let it be supposed that she has any heart?"

"I have had very rare opportunities of comparing my countrywomen with foreigners; but I find myself extremely unwilling to give implicit credit to this aspersion. I am certain, and so are you, Lord Ennerdale, if your praises of my sister are

sincere, that we have females in England who deserve a most honourable exemption from the censure which you are now casting upon them."

"Mrs. Somerville," resumed he, with great animation, "deserves an exemption from the charge of *this*, and almost every other human imperfection! I know nothing so spirited and agreeable as her conversation, nothing so open as her countenance, or so soft and benevolent as her disposition!

"I am content, I think," cried Adela, enchanted by the warmth of this eulogium, "to let you assert and believe whatever you please of the rest of our sex!"

"I am anxious, however," resumed he, "to clear myself from the suspicion of being, in regard to the merit of other women, a churlish sceptic. I honour and love female worth under whatever disguise I find it: but some little regret may be permitted me, that where intrinsic goodness is indisputable, it should, on any pretence, be deformed by coldly-cautious and repulsive manners."

"I have lately read," said Adela, averting her conscious looks, "a maxim of which

you seem to have very thoroughly imbibed the conviction: 'To be good and disagreeable, is high treason against virtue *.'—Yet, after all, if women, particularly the young and unmarried, are good-humoured and affectionate to their own connections, humane to the unhappy, charitable to the distressed, and obliging in society, why must they all be so studious to wear an artificial gloss of exquisite sensibility?—I have heard a wise old guest at Mr. Somerville's table—one who has '*read much, been a shrewd observer, and looked quite through the deeds of men,*' —I have heard him aver, that those women whose ready smiles, and fascinating manners, obtain the most popularity in the world, are often the least amiable in a family circle. The national female character in this kingdom, he asserts, is diffidence, tinctured, perhaps, with some degree of reserve: if these are taught to yield in public to all those courtly graces for which you, my lord, appear to be such an advocate, the danger is, that their stock of condescension will exhaust itself upon strangers, and that there

* Smith's Fragments.

will be little or none left for home consumption."

"If I understand the doctrine of Mr. Somerville's wise *old guest* rightly," cried the Earl, smiling, "it amounts to this:—that the women, who, in society, look the most forbidding, are storing up the largest hoard of tenderness to expend amongst their friends in private.—I am glad to be furnished with so convenient a clue; and shall henceforth deem myself authorised to interpret the most inveterate indications of pride, into deep humility—and the most austere coldness into genuine sensibility!"

"There will certainly," said Adela, "be something wonderfully liberal in adopting such a system: but remember, that the occasional mistakes into which it may lead you, are not to be ascribed to the erroneous doctrine of my venerable moralist. He taught, that the affectation of appearing sentimental *for effect*, blunts real feeling: but he never asserted, that to look like an icicle, and to carry nothing but moroseness into company, was a sure test of pre-eminent tenderness."

Here their dialogue was interrupted by

the approach of one of Lady Isabella's titled visitors, who tapping the Earl on the shoulder, and then resting her arms upon the back of Adela's chair, said—

"When are we to see you again mixing a little with the world, Lord Ennerdale?—You have been a most rigid recluse of late."

"I am much flattered to hear," cried he, "that the circumstance has not been overlooked.—I hope your ladyship is one of those who have done me the honour to regret my absence?"

"Oh, very pathetically indeed did I regret it, no longer ago than last night!—It was my miserable doom to give that petrifying thing, called an assembly. The concourse of ladies was most brilliant, but the dearth of men was so woeful, I could have fallen fast asleep in the middle of my own drawing-room. This happened through the malice of your friend Mrs. Elmer; she threatened me with some such vengeance for decoying away the majority of her best beaux from her last party, and yesterday she moved heaven and earth to repair the disgrace. To be honest, she perfectly succeeded; so now we must sign a treaty of

peace, and, each having been beaten in her turn, resolve to direct our arms against some other foe."

She then, as it seemed, by way of putting Lord Ennerdale *au courant des nouvelles* since his secession, gave him information of several rumoured marriages, quarrels, reconciliations—debts contracted at play, or executions incurred by extravagance. The amount of all these anecdotes, considering the shortness of the period in which they were said to have taken place, was marvellous, and to be equalled only by the volubility with which they were detailed.—

Lord Ennerdale listened with due patience, now and then regarding Adela to see how she bore this wordy torrent, and totally uninterested in every sentence that was uttered, till he heard some name which he seemed to respect, coupled with ridicule.—He then opened his eyes wider, and listened with uncompelled attention.—

The loquacious annalist was speaking of a ball at which she had met a Mrs. Rivers and her daughter—" Poor girl," continued she, " how comes it, that with so pretty a

face and person, she never gets a partner at any of these places but through the bustling efforts of her disagreeable mother?—Do you remember, Lord Ennerdale, how delightfully you were cajoled one night at Mrs. Copeland's to stand up with her?—Unfortunately, you were not present to do the civil thing again, so I took compassion upon her, and persuaded Tom Sedley, who has not yet got quite past all management, to shuffle down two dances with her."—

"Miss Rivers," said Lord Ennerdale, "has been kindly treated by nature in all respects but one—She has a mother wholly undeserving so artless, amiable, and unpresuming a daughter!"—

"Oh, I always said you liked her, and to own the truth, it was to make a merit of it to you that I assisted her the other night."—

Lord Ennerdale smiled, and made a little bow. Adela hung her head over her work, and felt but little disposed to wish the conversation prolonged.—The Lady, however, went on, and her unwilling auditress was obliged to remain stationary—

"There is a great deal of ill-luck," ob-

served she, "in poor Louisa's case; for the same undaunted spirit of persecution which succeeds so rarely in procuring for *her* the notice which Mrs. Rivers struggles to obtain, answers extremely well in a thousand *other* instances, and secures establishments for misses who have not half her beauty.—I suppose, the former gallantries of her mamma may be a little against her: but, after all, she never occasioned any violent *éclat*;—she never was either separated from Mr. Rivers, or divorced."—

Adela gasped for breath—her hands shook—a cold tremour shook her frame, and it was with difficulty that she commanded sufficient firmness to avoid bursting into tears. They rushed into her eyes, however, and stole down her burning cheeks, in defiance of all her efforts to repress them; but she sat with her back towards the lady who was speaking; and from Lord Ennerdale, she hoped the bending position of her head would conceal them.

Meanwhile, with a face dyed of as deep a crimson as her own, the Earl had hastily risen, and in order to effect some change in the conversation, called to Mr. Annesley,

and asked him whether he meant to go that evening to his club?

Mr. Annesley answered in the negative.—"You are not staying at home," cried the Lady, "to nurse my Lord's little boy, are you?"

"No," replied he; but I am staying at home to attend upon those who *do* nurse him:—only, my dear madam, take especial care not to proclaim that any one of these charitable nurses is my own wife!—It would terribly deduct from the gallantry of the story."

At that moment, the entrance of Mrs. Somerville afforded a most seasonable relief to Adela, who flew to her, and seemed, under her protection, to regain some portion of serenity and confidence. Lord Ennerdale was not long before he joined them; and Lady Isabella's other friends gradually departing, she was left to the society which her brother-in-law, and even Mr. Annesley, recent as had been his introduction to the two sisters, so infinitely preferred.

It was some consolation to Adela's wounded feelings, to hear Lord Ennerdale, before any regular conversation succeeded the exit

of these high-born visitors, reprobate in terms of strong indignation their manner of conducting themselves whilst they had staid—

"Such associates, Isabella," he observed, "injure your own sense of propriety and elegance. They seduce you into a participation of all their frivolous or arrogant airs; they teach you to throw off the well-bred mistress of the house, in order to become a mere listener to their whispered nothings, or—worse than nothings—whispered detraction! Lady Charles Irving, in particular, is". .

"The most frontless and pernicious little gossip," interrupted Mr. Annesley, "on whom rank and independence ever conferred the privilege of being ill-mannered with impunity!—Isabella knows that I hate her—she knows that it is an intimacy which, of all others, I the most thoroughly disapprove."—

Lady Isabella, not a little startled at this double attack, feebly denied the intimacy that was ascribed to her; her husband, to avoid prolonging the debate, was silent; and Lord Ennerdale, to shake off his own

chagrin, went and placed himself next to Mrs. Somerville, and tried to converse on general subjects.

That lady, when she saw that the passing storm had subsided, produced a short burlesque poem, published only that morning, and said to be written by one of the most celebrated wits of the day. Its subject, though not political, was popular, and most happily chosen; and its allusions to *times* rather than to *persons*, were arch, pointed, yet neither sour nor illiberal. It was handed to Mr. Annesley, who read it aloud with admirable humour and effect; and whilst he beguiled even the dispirited Adela of a smile, kept the rest of his audience in almost perpetual laughter throughout every page.

After a two hours visit, which seemed to have been of material benefit to the whole party, Mrs. Somerville rose to take leave, and Adela, in a hasty whisper, entreated that her return to Cumberland Place might be deferred no longer than till the next morning.

Lady Isabella, the flexible and facile Lady Isabella, restored by the good humour which Mrs. Somerville had diffused amongst them,

to all her natural complacency, parted from Adela for the night, with a mind as cordially impressed in her favour as it had ever been during any period of their short acquaintance. Her disposition seemed to possess something of the faculty ascribed to the chameleon's body; it could change its hue, and assimilate to that of every object near it. She lived not, as it has been fabled of that animal, upon air: but her understanding, incapable of bearing solid sustenance, fed upon vague reports, and borrowed opinions. Towards whomever she heard warmly praised or bitterly censured, she was, according to the lenity or malice of the last speaker, '*every thing by turns and nothing long*.' One minute she hated, the next she adored them. Luckily, no one had hitherto presumed to revile her husband in her ladyship's hearing; feeble indeed would have been his chance against a cunning slanderer! She would have wept, but she would have believed the most improbable aspersions: and even Lord Ennerdale, all-perfect as he had ever appeared to her, might easily have been transformed, by calumny, into a monster unworthy to live.

When Adela, in the retirement of her chamber, secure from the observation of every human beholder, had leisure to "commune with her own heart," she prayed with streaming eyes, for resignation to hear, with less irritability and impatience, the allusions to her mother's story, which, either through malice or inadvertency, she found it vain to expect escaping. If malice dictated them, how could she better assist its gratification, than by betraying the pang they inflicted? If they were uttered inadvertently, was it not her duty to submit without resentment to an undesigned offence? "At all events," she cried, "whether the speech made by Lady Charles Irving in my vicinity, proceeded from a premeditated wish to shock me, or whether it was pronounced in ignorance of its reference to my affairs, let me, whilst I strive not to think of it with bitterness, let me earnestly supplicate Heaven, that *I* may never be the means of giving equal pain to any human creature! And let it also gratefully stimulate me, to pray for a blessing on those generous beings who, notwithstanding all the disadvantages by which I am encompassed, still behold me

with regard, and treat me with considerate delicacy!"

In this supplication, she could not but include Lord Ennerdale, whose conduct towards her, after the consternation into which he had seen her thrown, had been impressed with more seriousness of respect, more marked deference and attention, than at any preceding moment of their acquaintance. From her inmost soul did she thank and esteem him for a proof of feeling so nobly timed; it reassured her—it consoled, it even touched her; and, as she sunk to rest, her last thought was devoted to wishing for his happiness.

CHAP. VIII.

INTEGRITY.

DURING breakfast the next morning, at which Adela endeavoured to appear with her accustomed cheerfulness, Lady Isabella was informed, that her jeweller was below with some ornaments which she had sent to him to be new set for the approaching birth-day. She gave orders that he should be shewn up,

which Mr. Annesley hearing, and anticipating nothing but weariness from the conference, hastily dispatched the remainder of his breakfast, and made good his retreat.

Lord Ennerdale, more tolerant, or, perhaps, sufficiently interested by the contents of the newspaper, to disregard the man's entrance, maintained his ground; and Adela, too unaffected to pretend any disdain of the fashionable and elegant trinkets which were officiously displayed to her notice, amused herself in looking over them, whilst Lady Isabella was seriously meditating upon the effect produced by the new arrangement of her own superb decorations.

At length, a ring, consisting of a single but most perfect turquoise, struck Adela's view, and somewhat excited her desire to become its purchaser. She drew it from its case and tried it on; it fitted her exactly; and the more she contemplated it, the more tempting it appeared to her—

"Is not this," said she, approaching Lady Isabella, "an uncommonly fine turquoise?"—and, as she spoke, she displayed its clear and serene blue upon her finger.

Lady Isabella was too intently occupied in

reflecting upon the yet further improvements which might be made in a diamond necklace lying before her, to bestow more than a momentary glance upon Adela's simple little ring, or to make any answer more satisfactory than—

"Yes—it's quiet and pretty enough."—

"May I look at it?" said Lord Ennerdale, throwing down the newspaper—

"Oh, do," cried Adela, "and tell me, whether it is not the sort of thing to excite ideas quite poetical? There is a purity and softness in its hue, that reminds me of a lovely day in spring, when,

> 'Whispering pleasure as they fly
> 'Cool Zephyrs through the clear blue sky
> 'Their gathered fragrance fling."

The Earl, smiling at her animation, said, —"I shall, henceforward, always prefer a turquoise to any other gem. If you mean to buy it, let me often have the pleasure of seeing upon your hand, so mild and well imagined an emblem of a spring day."—

"I never yet was guilty of any extravagance of this kind," said she; "but, I own that here is a temptation which I can

hardly withstand.—What is its price?" added she, turning to the jeweller.

The man stated to her, as he protested, the lowest terms upon which he could part with it, which yet appeared to Adela so exorbitantly high, that her smiles vanished, and she wished the ring a thousand miles off. Yet, ashamed, in the presence of Lady Isabella and her brother, to proclaim the slender state of her finances, she paid, with secret self-reproach, for the over-rated bawble, leaving herself, in so doing, no more than two guineas for her whole remaining quarter—that is to say, for nearly three weeks.

Soon after this little negociation was concluded, Lord Ennerdale quitted the room, and Lady Isabella, in a few minutes, likewise went away to search for the jeweller's last bill.

The door was scarcely closed, when the obsequious tradesman approaching his young customer with an air of some embarrassment, hesitatingly said—

"You will not be offended, I hope, ma'am, if I venture—if I take the liberty, to remind you, that we have, I believe, a

little account standing in your name, which, perhaps, has escaped your memory."

"In my name, Sir?—This must certainly be a mistake, for I never, till to-day, purchased any trinkets in my life."

"Pardon me, ma'am—but your name—I think I heard Lady Isabella address you by the name of Cleveland."

"Yes, Sir, you did."

"We received an order, about two years ago, ma'am, to send to Cumberland Place, for a lady of that name, a cornelian seal, set in gold, and a pair of coral bracelets. Were they ever delivered?"

"Yes, Sir, they were; you are perfectly correct, and I shall be anxious to discharge the debt immediately."

The fact is, that poor Adela found she had been innocently defrauding the jeweller of his money the full time which he stated, through the carelessness of her sister, Mrs. Erington, from whom the things he mentioned had been sent down to her as a gift, by Talbot Cleveland, whilst she was at Rosedown Court: and, as such, had been quietly worn ever since. Mrs. Erington, however, had left town afterwards in a

great hurry, and forgotten to pay for them: but the whole business was clear to Adela the instant that she heard the man's demand specified, and she conscientiously resolved not to detain from him his lawful due an hour longer.

Yet, to make rectitude accord with ability, in this case, required a sacrifice which cost her some pain. She had no means of paying the full value of the seal and bracelets, if she persisted in retaining the ring. A debt, however, was so hateful to her, and, unpractised as she was in incurring any, so formidable, that she rather preferred acknowledging to the shopkeeper her insufficiency;—and thus relieving herself from the burthen of a useless ornament, which she now thought it the height of folly, in such circumstances as hers, to have ever coveted.

"Sir," said she to the Jeweller, blushing as she spoke, "I have it not in my power, if I retain this pretty ring, immediately to cancel my former debt. May I, therefore, beg that you will take it back at the price for which you just now sold it to me?—I believe that then, according to what you

tell me is the amount of the old account, I shall, with the addition of this guinea, have wholly discharged what I owe you."

The civil tradesman agreed to this arrangement, yet not without expressing his regret at depriving her of a trinket with which she had appeared so particularly pleased. He assured her, that she was perfectly welcome to keep possession of the ring, and to pay for it at her own time. But Adela's principles were not merely speculative; they were practical and sincere. She thanked him; yet intreated that he would suffer her to terminate the whole affair at once. He made no further opposition; took the guinea still due, and the half-regretted turquoise, and, had only just time, before Lady Isabella re-appeared, to assure her, that he would send a written acknowledgment the instant he reached home. Two hours afterwards, he punctually fulfilled his promise.

Mrs. Somerville, at the time that she had fixed, called for young Ossely, and her joyfully-again-recovered Adela. Lady Isabella, her husband, and her brother-in-law were all at home to witness the invalid's removal, and to reiterate to his fair friends their fer-

vent thanks for the obligations which they had, and still were, conferring upon him.

The child, smiling and gratified, was brought down in Margaret's arms, and conveyed to Mrs. Somerville's carriage; and that lady, glad to abridge the acknowledgments which she was receiving, called to Adela, and immediately followed.

Lord Ennerdale, in their way down stairs, found an opportunity of saying to Adela—

"Though what I have already witnessed, has taught me to expect from you every thing that is kind and generous, yet gratify me, I beseech you, before you go, with an assurance that, jointly with Mrs. Somerville, you will consider yourself as my poor Algernon's protectress."

"I will, with the greatest pleasure," answered Adela.

"Thank you," resumed he, "a thousand times, I thank you, for this and every other obligation which you have conferred upon us during your short residence under this roof. Oh, how melancholy a void," added he, looking at her with the most expressive air of regret, "will your absence leave here! But I take possession again to-night of my

own house: I could not bear to look round for you in vain, where I had once beheld you as an inmate."

Adela was a little confused, not so much by the direct purpose of this speech, as by the warmth and seriousness with which it was uttered. She hurried silently forward, unable, as he put her into the carriage, to speak either to him or to Mr. Annesley. She could only bow to them after she was seated; and the next moment, the horses proceeded.

The rapture of her little nieces on beholding her, as they termed it, come back again "for good," was, to a heart affectionate as hers, gratifying in the highest degree. They were not indulged, however, with permission to take of the feeble and delicate guest whom their mother had brought home, more than a passing glance. He was immediately transferred from the carriage to the quiet but cheerful room which had been prepared for him; and not even Lady Harriet obtained leave to remain with him above ten minutes. He was thus exempted from all unnecessary exertion; and the fatigue of the removal was so effectually counteracted by these judicious precautions, that, half an

hour after his installation in his new abode, he was conversing with Adela as serenely, and seemed as collected, and as much *at home*, as if he had never known any other residence.

When Adela retired to her own apartment to dress for dinner, Amy, producing a sealed letter, in a condition that bore evident testimony to its having been extremely ill treated, said, with much irritation—

"That for you, dear Missy. Me only get it by chance and good-luck.—It come for you the day after you leave your fine aunt's,—and there it be tossed and battered about, by saucy servants, ever since. Me call there to-day for something me forget when we come here,—and then, me spy it out upon the housekeeper's chimney!—Oh, what fine passion me in, at their laziness and impudence!"

Adela, on opening the dirty scroll, found, with an instant dread of something wrong, that it was written by her mother's attached servant, Mrs. Temple. Its purport was, to communicate to her, with many cautions not to betray who was her informant, that the brother of Mrs. Cameron, a man named

Norris, was become a resident in the vicinity of Pine-Lodge, and paid such assiduous court to Lady Rosalvan, that there seemed every reason to dread he would make an impression upon her heart, and succeed in inducing her to favour his avowed pretensions:—"For the love of heaven, madam," pursued Mrs. Temple, "write to my dear "lady, and endeavour to dissuade her from "this ruinous project. The man is a pro-"fligate, and a needy, low-minded adven-"turer. He will not leave my lady a gui-"nea; and the disgrace of such a connection, "will be worse than any thing that has yet "happened. Tell her, that the news came "to you by public report; tell her, that "the wretch to whom she would entrust her "person and property, bears the most no-"torious bad character;—and don't fear, "madam, in so doing, to assert what is not "true. I have the most positive informa-"tion that he is completely worthless.—"write immediately, I beseech you—If "any thing can save her, it will be your "representations."

What a new source of disturbance was here opened for a daughter disposed to be so affectionate, so dutiful, so warmly in-

terested in her mother's happiness! Filled with dismay, and but too justly distrustful of her own influence, she hesitated long whether to hazard the interference which Mrs. Temple so urgently recommended. Yet, if there appeared the remotest *possibility* of its success, was she justifiable in withholding it?—With shaking fingers, and an agitated heart, she, at length, took up a pen. Nothing could be more gentle, more respectful, though earnest, than the style in which she wrote; to persuasions, to entreaties, rather than to *representations*, she had recourse; and these, however serious they might be in disapprobation of Norris, were so strictly guarded from in delicacy towards her mother, that the humblest intercessor for a personal boon, could not have used language at once more suppliant and more fervent.

This arduous task accomplished, which, with a sigh, Adela herself acknowledged to be a most hopeless and unthankful one, she strove to dismiss from her countenance the remains of inquietude that were impressed upon it, and descended to the dining-parlour.

CHAP. IX.

CONFABULATING.

THE prudent regulations adopted with regard to young Ossely,—who, provided with all requisite indulgences, was amused when he betrayed languor, or tranquillized and soothed when his countenance denoted irritability,—effected, in a single week, a change so obvious in his spirits, appetite, and strength, that Dr. R. discontinued his own visits, and made him wholly over to the incomparable management of Mrs. Somerville.

About this time, Lord Ennerdale, a more frequent visitor than ever in Cumberland Place, and hourly becoming to every individual there, a more welcome one, happened, whilst indulging Lady Harriet with what she loved best upon earth—(a game of romps)—to occasion the demolition of a little toy watch, the gift of her aunt Eudocia. The novelty of the plaything being over, this was a misfortune which the child found

it no very difficult matter to bear with philosophy. But her indulgent father, sorry to have deprived her of any thing to which she could attach the slightest value, determined, on leaving the house, to provide her with some compensation. For this purpose, in his way home, he stopped at his sister-in-law's jeweller, and desired to be shewn some children's trinkets.

Whilst one of the shopmen was obeying this order, the Earl's eyes accidentally rested upon an open case, containing a variety of lockets, broaches, and rings. Amongst the latter, one, in particular, struck him;—it seemed the very counterpart of that which he had so lately seen Adela meditating to purchase. He took it in his hand, and was surveying it with some perplexity, when the master of the shop approached—

"Did you not," said the Earl, "sell a ring remarkably like this, a few days ago, to a lady at Mr. Annesley's?"

The jeweller hesitated, simpered, and looked so full of meaning, that Lord Ennerdale, unable to repress his curiosity, per-

sisted in his interrogations, till the whole mystery (with many respectful injunctions to secresy) was explained. The simple and unadorned recital, went straight to the Earl's heart—"just, and well-principled Adela!" he internally exclaimed, "how do I honour the quiet and unostentatious self-denial of this little transaction!" He replaced the ring, however, with apparent indifference; and, having selected for Lady Harriet, some trifling ornament adapted to her age, quitted the shop—firmly resolved, not to let the day close, without finding the means of unsuspectedly purchasing again for its recent, but transient possessor, the beautiful turquoise ring.

He was proceeding slowly down the street, and had reached a crossing at which a concourse of carriages obliged him to pause, when, looking up, he beheld in one of those that were nearest to him, his friend Mrs. Elmer. Their eyes met at the same moment; and pulling the check-string, she invited him, with a smile, to the carriage window.—

"I do not ask you," cried she, "why I

never see you, because I am apprised, that, just at present, you are only to be seen moving in the same orbit with one particular planet.—But make haste, and extend your range a little, and shew yourself again in our humbler circles, as gay, and as agreeable as ever."—

"I assure you," cried he, "that if gaiety is what you are in quest of, you have had a most fortunate escape lately in not beholding much of me!—my poor Ossely has been at death's door; and nothing can have been less joyous than my feelings during that period."—

"All *that* I can believe: but the child is now recovering. The distance, therefore, at which you still remain from every former associate, is no longer the effect of grief, but of choice. To say the truth, I hold it somewhat disloyal in you, to have recourse in this business, to any false pretences. You are in love, Lord Ennerdale—all the world knows it; and the surest way to obtain the world's applause, is, to glory openly in your choice!"

"As the world," said he, laughing, "is so exceedingly obliging as thus to interest itself in my concerns, I would that it had

the additional benevolence to act as an intercessor for me with the fair planet round which I am said to be revolving!"

"Oh, you, doubtless, are much in want of its assistance in that quarter!" cried Mrs. Elmer, ironically—"Poor soul! it is melancholy to think how few are your recommendations, and how little is your chance of success!—But I must now release you. I am charged with a very puzzling commission, and hopeless as I am of being able to execute it at all, I dare not renounce the attempt till I have tried at every shop in London."—

"What is it?" enquired Lord Ennerdale.—

"My mother," answered Mrs. Elmer, "is in town for a few days, and, for my sins, has brought with her, to be repaired, this curious, and old-fashioned little inlaid casket:" and as she spoke, she exhibited one of that description at the window. "By the value which she attaches to it, one might be tempted to consider it as an heirloom. At all events, it is a prodigious favourite; and, I verily believe, one of my poor mother's principal inducements for coming to Lon-

don. But the operation of mending it, I suspect, will be very troublesome; for all the tradesmen to whom I have hitherto applied, decline having any concern with it."

"Take it," said the Earl, "to Jackson's, in this street; I think it not unlikely that you may have better success with him."

Much pleased at this prospect, Mrs. Elmer was then bidding him a final good-morning, when suddenly recollecting that it was at Jackson's the ring still remained which he so anxiously desired to procure, he stopped her to say—

"If you drive to the shop I recommend, will you condescend to perform a little commission for me likewise?"—

"With pleasure.—What is it?"

He then described to her the object in question, entreating her to buy it, as for herself, and promising to call for it at her house that evening, or the ensuing morning.

Mrs. Elmer readily, but with a significant smile, engaged to comply with this request, and gave orders that her carriage should proceed.

Enchanted to have put the negociation in train, Lord Ennerdale walked on, and ere

he reached home, provided himself at a shop where he was wholly unknown, with a turquoise broach, exceeding in size and value, though not perhaps in beauty, the ring which it was to match.

In the evening, Mrs. Elmer, with a little note of good-humoured, though sarcastic import, sent to his own mansion the purchase which she had been directed to make.

"I would not," she wrote, "be accessary "to delaying, even for a single evening, the "presentation of this elegant little gift to "the no less elegant being for whom I guess "it to be designed. May she, with her "most gracious smiles, accept the offering "which I thus early put it in your power "to deposit at her feet! But, ah! my "Lord, let her beware that she emulate not "in its inconstancy the nature of this love-"ly but deceitful gem! Its hue, we are "told, is evanescent. May *her* soft lustre, "*her* mild perfection be of more permanent "— of unfading stability!"

Lord Ennerdale read this poetic flight with a conscious smile, but with no design of disavowing to its arch writer the purpose it ascribed to him. He was well assured

that she would never intentionally betray him in Cumberland Place; and wherever else she might chuse to publish her conjectures, was to him a matter of perfect indifference.

An engagement which he had no means of breaking, prevented his repairing to Mrs. Somerville's that evening; but the following morning he went there to breakfast.

Adela and Mr. Somerville, the former looking over a Review just brought in, the latter reading a half dried newspaper, were sitting at the tea-table *tête-à-tête*.

Lord Ennerdale inquired if Mrs. Somerville was indisposed?

Adela said that she would be down stairs presently, but having a little headache, had chosen to breakfast in her own apartment.

She then handed to him some tea; told him that her sister had a great deal to talk to him about, relating to his little boy and girl, and apologized for not ordering them to be brought down, by hinting that she feared their high spirits, Lady Harriet's, at least, might be somewhat too much for a head already disordered—

"The danger of that," said Lord Enner-

dale, "is, indeed, unquestionable! Harriet's turbulence equals that of the wildest school-boy. It sometimes, even independent of my apprehension that it should be troublesome to Mrs. Somerville, gives me a little disquiet on the child's own account. I am alarmed lest all this ungovernable love of frolic should degenerate into the boisterousness of a complete hoyden."

"And yet," said Adela, laughing at his seriousness, "who half so guilty, Lord Ennerdale, of encouraging her passion for sport as yourself?"

"I own it.—But the blandishments of childhood are to me irresistible. I often come here, determined to repress the little creature's advances—to preach gentleness and tranquillity to her—to maintain all the gravity of paternal decorum. But before I have been in the room half an hour, she winds herself round me with so petitioning a smile—she invites me, by so many ingenious wiles, to notice and to play with her, that my resolution fails, and I become as very a child as she is."—

"Well, my Lord," cried Adela, "set your heart at rest, however true this representation

may be. My sister delights in Lady Harriet's animation, and I can assure you, that we are all quite as much tempted to indulge it as yourself. As to her contracting rude habits, there can be little danger of that, where the disposition is naturally so docile, and the heart so affectionate. A word spoken with mild seriousness, is reproof sufficient if she ever seems disposed to carry a jest too far. To sullenness or obstinacy she is an utter stranger; and the ingenuousness with which she can be induced to acknowledge herself in the wrong, has often been held out as an example worthy of the highest praise and of the closest imitation, to my sister's own children. Impose not upon yourself therefore, the irksome task of checking her frank love of glee: it can never be unwelcome to those who are fond of children, except in moments of indisposition."

"That Adela is fond of them," cried Mr. Somerville, relapsing into his old foible of seizing upon any pretence to exalt the merit of whatever she said or did in Lord Ennerdale's presence, "the good-nature of this apology, I think, sufficiently testifies."

"It is no apology—it is the mere state-

ment of a matter of fact!" cried Adela, always provoked at these indelicate efforts—"I feel not, that I have any right to profess for children a more than common regard. When they are pleasant, they amuse me; when they are perverse, I have as little tolerance as most other people."—

Lord Ennerdale had now gained too much insight into Adela's character, to listen to this disclaiming speech with any surprise; but it recalled to the memory of Mr. Somerville the contract into which he had entered, and filled him with concern for not having observed it more faithfully.

When Mrs. Somerville came down, and had satisfied Lord Ennerdale's anxious enquiries relating to her health, she scrupled not to beg, that Adela would put herself under Mr. Somerville's protection, and sally forth for a walk—

"I am bent," added she, "upon holding with my Lord an immediate and undisturbed conference; and as you can neither of you throw any lights upon the subjects we shall discuss, I own that it would be a prodigious relief to me, to turn you both fairly out of doors."—

They laughed at this unceremonious declaration, but immediately retreated; and Adela prevailed upon her brother-in-law, previous to his accustomed ride, to take two or three turns with her in the Park.

As soon as they were by themselves, Mrs. Somerville relieved Lord Ennerdale from the perplexity into which her anxiety for an immediate conference had thrown him, by saying—

"As you have done me the honour to refer to my decision, the most eligible mode of disposing, for the next two or three years, of your interesting little boy, and his light-hearted sister, I am anxious, though at the hazard of appearing to you a little abrupt, to state to you my opinion without delay. Some time hence, I shall not be in a predicament to converse with you upon the subject, or to take in it any useful steps. Yet, imagine not that I am in any haste to part with my young guests. Nothing short of an absolute injunction from yourself, should yet induce me to resign their guardianship. Algernon still demands great watchfulness; and that which has hitherto been bestowed upon him, I have had the pleasure of seeing

prosper so well, that it would grieve and disappoint me to give him up before his recovery is completed. At this moment, I am solicitous only to talk over plans for the future, not to suggest any alteration in those which we are at present pursuing."—

"You are always," said the Earl, "solicitous to do that which is wisest and best. Speak, dearest Mrs. Somerville—I am all impatience to know what you would propose."—

"But can you," resumed she, half smiling, "can you bear the plainest sincerity—the most perfect unreserve?"

"From you, I shall consider it as an additional obligation."—

"You expect not, I can well believe, to hear any thing very shocking, and, in truth, I have nothing of that nature to state. But, my dear Lord Ennerdale, I have attended unremittingly to the disposition, as well as to the health of your poor boy almost from the hour he first entered this house, and have fully confirmed myself in the idea I so early entertained, that his is a character of extreme difficulty to manage. He must not, when his restora-

tion is thoroughly established, be committed again to the direction of nurses and domestics. His spirit is too imperious to submit to such controul. He will obey no female whom he does not behold, like me, invested with the authority of mistress of the house. Yet, his intractability proceeds not from the false courage of a Bobadil; he does not disobey his nursery attendants because he does not fear them, but because his last attendant has implanted in him an antipathy to female domestics in general; and he regards them all, more or less, with distrust and contempt. Even my faithful and rational Margaret, he is beginning to treat with airs of consequential disdain; and the younger women about him, he openly defies, and without condescending to dispute a point with them, goes on his own way, exactly as if he had not heard them."

"Can any thing," cried Lord Ennerdale, vexed to the soul, "be more grievous than this account?—Yet—I will be honest with you, Mrs. Somerville, and acknowledge that it surprises far less than it chagrins me.

There prevailed, whilst this boy's poor mother was alive, an unhappy system of favouritism in our family, the most pernicious in its effects, both immediate, and, I fear, eventual. Harriet was overlooked, and Algernon overprized. A sense of equity led me to revolt against such unjust partiality, and I rather sought to control and repress my natural fondness for him, than dared to indulge myself in giving it free scope. But the occasional restraint which he found imposed upon him by me, during our short interviews, could not counteract the mischief that was hourly doing in the nursery, and in his mother's dressing room. There it was that the seeds were sown of all this infantine arrogance. More than two thirds of his short life have been spent in the enjoyment of boundless indulgence; and when I reflect upon the dreadful contrast which he recently experienced under the barbarous dominion of Manby, I rather wonder how it was possible that he should survive it, than feel the slightest astonishment at its ravaging effects. Yet tell me, I conjure you tell me, that you do not think his temper irremediably injured!"

"By no means," cried Mrs. Somerville, "it is only rendered incapable of submitting to what is vulgarly denominated *petticoat government.*"

"But at scarcely five years old he is too young for a school—and I should be almost ashamed of asking any man of sense to undertake the office of tutor to such a baby."

"And in your place, my Lord, I am not sure that so should not I!—But listen to a plan which has lately occurred to me, and which appears to me more and more feasible the longer I meditate upon it. In the village which adjoins to your estate and to Mr. Somerville's, resides, with his mother and sister, a young man who has lately taken orders, and aspires to the humble office of curate to our parish minister. The mother of this deserving youth had the charge of educating my sister Erington and myself, and resided under my father's roof, for that purpose, above ten years. An acquaintance of so long standing enables me, of course, to speak with certainty of her real character; and never was there a more pure, a more respectable, a more

blameless one. Her daughter, equally well intentioned, though not so highly cultivated, is, however, an admirable domestic manager, and ever ready to serve and oblige all within her reach. The son is universally well spoken of for his moral qualities, and, I am told, is an excellent scholar. They occupy a small house, or rather large cottage, on the outskirts of the village. The mother's little income, and some trifle inherited from his father by the young man, frugally maintains them all. These excellent souls, my Lord, it has struck me, might be induced, on his leaving my house, to take charge of your little Algernon. They are not mercenary, yet some addition to their circumstances must be desirable to them; and they would gratefully delight in complying with almost any request which I could make to them. Should the attempt to effect this negociation be prosperous, remember that Lord Ossely will only be at the distance of three or four miles from Mordington Castle, and scarcely half so far removed from Rosedown Court."

"Say no more, my admirable friend!" cried the Earl, enchanted. "I thought it

but just to hear you to the end, though half the inducements which you have so considerately enumerated would have sufficed to determine me. What a weight of anxiety you have removed from my mind! How infinite and important are the obligations which I owe you! Ah, dearest Mrs. Somerville, bring this meditated plan to a happy conclusion as speedily as you can. Write, I beseech you, without delay to the deserving family which you have described. Offer them, on my part, a *carte blanche*;—or rather, signify to me yourself the terms which I ought to propose to them.—But—for where will be an end of my encroachments upon your generous friendship—but what shall I do with my little Harriet?"

"Set all the wisest and most discerning of your female friends to work, in order to find out for her a respectable and experienced governess. I will pay myself the compliment of joining their corps, and will add to their enquiries, the most diligent researches in my power to make. Should we be successful, you will be exempt from the painful necessity of sending both your children from home; and *Prince Hal,* as you call

her, may, with profit to herself, and pleasure to you, be a constant inmate with you, as well in London as in the country.—And, now, Lord Ennerdale, let me hope that you will do me the justice to believe, I should never have volunteered my opinion thus officiously, had I seen that amidst your numerous connections, you possessed any adviser whom you were in habits of consulting, or with whom you apparently wished to discuss this truly important subject."

"The only individual of my own family," replied the Earl, "from whom I could expect counsel, or solicit assistance on such a subject, is Lady Ennerdale. But I have been deterred from applying to her, by the consciousness, that it would be a mortal offence not to be guided implicitly by her judgment, whether it accorded with my own feelings or wholly militated against them. I may commit mistakes, but the mortification of discovering that I have done so, and the trouble of repairing them, are perhaps preferable to being blindly led on—even in the right path—at the peremptory will of others. Continue to me, therefore, dear Mrs. Somerville, the protection which I so

voluntarily prize, and trust to the *presentiment* I have, that, like mercy, it will prove twice blessed,"—it will bless you, the giver, when you reflect upon the happy consequences which it produces,—and us, the receivers, when we experience them."

"I will humbly hope that it may. But now, shall I ring to order Lady Harriet and her brother to be brought down? You have not yet, I believe, seen them to-day?"

"After so long a conference, you will probably be glad if I release you; I will, therefore, run up a moment to *them*, instead of having them brought down to *me*. Farewell, dearest Mrs. Somerville; forgive my having taken up so large a portion of your morning; write for me, I entreat, as soon as you can, into the country,—and, above all, be indulgent to my want of self-denial, and as Mr. Somerville has asked me to dinner, prepare yourself, unless you prohibit it, to see me here again at six o'clock."

"Terrible!" exclaimed Mrs. Somerville, "I really shall be compelled to wish you had a wife at home, to take the trouble of your company off my hands!"

"Would I had, were she but of your

chusing!—But, even then, you would gain nothing by it, for my wife would probably be as anxious to live in your society as I am myself."

Saying this, he ran up stairs to pay a short visit to his children.

On quitting them, he recollected, as he passed the room in which his recent conversation had been held, that Lady Isabella had entrusted him with a message about an Opera box, which he had omitted to deliver. He stepped in again to repair the failure, but Mrs. Somerville was gone. The moment seemed propitious to his wish of depositing without being observed, the ring and broach which he destined for Adela. They were sealed up, and directed to her in a feigned hand. Her work-box stood upon a marble table, under one of the pier glasses;—into that, he hastily dropped his anonymous offering, threw down the lid, and immediately quitted the house.

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that I dare say you will henceforward wish for nothing so much as an evening passed with a dozen or twenty—or if we cannot make up the full number—*half* a dozen *pleasant people,* chosen from amongst established friends."

"This compliment to my domestic taste," said Adela, "is bestowed upon me rather at an unlucky moment, and if you were often wont, my dear brother, to reprove by implication, I could do no less than think that such was your present intention. Till to-night, I have lived in a crowd the whole week!—How promising a beginning for a votary of small, select parties!"

Her eye, during this speech, had rested upon the direction of the little packet which Lord Ennerdale had conveyed into her box, and which now, without reflecting upon what it was likely to contain, she carelessly broke open, saying—

"I totally forget when, and why, this parcel was so mysteriously sealed up."

As she uttered these words, the ring and broach fell upon her lap, and an air of astonishment amounting almost to distrust of

her own eye-sight, took instant possession of her features.

Lord Ennerdale, nearly as much surprised by the tardiness of this discovery, as she was by the discovery itself, turned hastily away, and began silently pacing up and down the room.

"When did you buy these pretty trinkets, Adela?" said Mrs. Somerville, taking them from the lap of her perplexed and motionless sister—"You were in a marvellously extravagant humour to make *two* such purchases at one time."

"It is some unaccountable mistake!" cried Adela; "they are not mine, I assure you."

"Not by the vulgar process of common traffic, perhaps," said Mr. Annesley, contemplating with a smile the writing upon the envelope: "but by gift, they indubitably are yours. Look at this direction;—can any thing be plainer, clearer, I was going to say, fairer:—but fairness and disguise are terms which accord not well together."

Lord Ennerdale most sincerely wished himself in the middle of the square. Yet,

to avoid the singularity of being the only one present who seemed uninterested in what was passing, he compelled himself again to approach the table.

"Disguise?" repeated Mrs. Somerville; "Do you think, Mr. Annesley, that the writing is disguised?"

"Nothing can be more palpable. The fair Adela will, however, doubtless, in time, elucidate to her own satisfaction this mysterious piece of gallantry. Meanwhile, I beg to congratulate her on the good taste of her invisible friend. I have seldom seen prettier ornaments."

"No friend," said Adela, a little proudly, "either visible or invisible, out of my own family, could deign to make me such a present; and from none, out of my own family, would I chuse to accept it."

"But how can you help yourself?" demanded Mr. Somerville—"Here are the trinkets; they are directed to you, and to no one else; they are in your custody—in your hands; you know not whence they are sent;—then, how are you to get rid of them?"

"I know the shop where they must have

been bought," answered Adela, hastily; "and to-morrow, I shall entreat my sister to go thither with me, and get the whole matter explained."

"Do you think, Ennerdale," said Mr. Annesley, with ironical gravity, "that the method which Miss Cleveland purposes to pursue, is likely to effect a discovery?"

"It seems promising," answered Lord Ennerdale, in a voice somewhat less steady than usual, and secretly provoked at the significance with which the question had been asked.

Adela was struck by the tone in which this brief reply was uttered. She raised her eyes, and, for a moment, fixed them on the Earl's face. An instantaneous persuasion of the truth flashed upon her mind. He ventured not, conscious that she was regarding him, to direct a glance towards her: but the expression of his features, the heightened colour in his cheeks, the downcast, and somewhat disconcerted air with which he affected to be surveying the feigned handwriting,—all these were indications which, to his transient, but penetrating observer, imparted full and perfect conviction. She

dropped her eyes in silent confusion; a bright blush stole across her face, and taking up the trinkets, she replaced them in the repository whence they had been drawn,—and totally desisted from all further animadversion upon the subject.

Lord Ennerdale was perplexed how to interpret this conduct. He sometimes flattered himself that he had been guessed, and faintly indulged a hope that the offering which he deemed so humble, was unresentingly accepted. Her pride of heart, and the complete impartiality with which she had ever treated him, speedily, however, dispelled these gratifying ideas, and substituted in their place his wonted insecurity and diffidence.

Mrs. Somerville, perceiving that her sister was averse from saying, at the present moment, any thing further of the ornaments, started other subjects of conversation, and assisted in supporting them with such spirit and pleasantry, that the remainder of the time they spent together, was rendered delightful to all parties.

When the two sisters retired for the

night, Mrs. Somerville enquired how it happened that Adela should know the shop where the anonymous gift had probably been purchased?

"I recollected the ring," replied Adela, "the moment I saw it. Whilst I was at Lady Isabella's, I fancied myself, for a few minutes, its legal possessor."

She then gave a clear account of the whole affair; and in excuse for not having mentioned it sooner, added—

"I was unwilling, without necessity, to speak of Alicia's thoughtlessness in regard to the seal and bracelets. The surprise and momentary chagrin with which I found them charged to me, is over now, and I entreat that nothing may ever be said to her upon the subject."—

Mrs. Somerville passed some very pointed strictures upon the conduct, in this affair, of her absent sister, and could with difficulty be induced to promise, that when they met, she would observe such total forbearance as Adela solicited. Yet, in the end, she gave her word to remain silent; and it was then agreed, that they should drive together to

Jackson's in the morning, and endeavour to obtain from him all the information which he could furnish.

The intelligence procured from this source may be easily conjectured. The jeweller disclaimed all knowledge of the broach: but the ring he perfectly remembered having sold to a lady, an entire stranger to him, who had paid for it at the moment of its purchase, and who, having consulted him on the practicability of repairing an old-fashioned inlaid casket, and found him reluctant to engage in the unprofitable enterprise, had carried it away with her, and never appeared in his shop since.

The unknown lady, and the old-fashioned inlaid casket, puzzled the two sisters extremely. Mrs. Somerville declared that the business was involved in so much obscurity that she could discern through it no ray of light; whilst Adela kept her thoughts in her own bosom—but, from that day forward, wore her new decorations with a frequency and apparent preference which she manifested for no other ornaments in her possession.

A fortnight now elapsed, at the end of

which, all preliminary arrangements being adjusted, and young Ossely restored to sufficient health and strength to bear the journey, it was determined, that his father should himself convey him to the tranquil and well-chosen abode which Mrs. Somerville had pointed out.

Yet to leave town at this moment, though Lord Ennerdale knew it to be a duty, was no trifling sacrifice. Adela, he not only heard from a hundred voices, but himself witnessed, was hourly becoming an object of greater attraction to the wealthy and ostentatious Sir Patrick Harley. Inert as that gentleman usually proved himself, and deficient in penetration, he yet possessed sagacity sufficient to be aware of the advantage he might derive from obtaining admission at Mr. Somerville's. They had long known each other, and had often met at General Cleveland's, but they never had visited. Sir Patrick engaged a reciprocal friend, to insinuate his wish of being upon terms of more established intimacy. The unsuspicious Somerville listened without repugnance to the hint; he left a card at Sir Patrick's door; Sir Patrick lost no time in returning

the visit, and to cement the incipient friendship, he invited Mr. Somerville to an epicurean repast. The invitation was accepted, and a short time after, Mr. Somerville repaid the obligation, by arranging for the Baronet a dinner-party at his own house.

On the day that it took place, the mistress of the mansion, too much indisposed to do the honours of her table, delegated the office to Mrs. Erington, her sister, newly arrived on a visit to her from Wales. Lady Isabella and Mr. Annesley were likewise at this dinner: but Lord Ennerdale pleaded a prior engagement.

He knew, indeed, that it would be impossible, now the Baronet had gained footing at the house, to avoid frequently encountering him. He could by no means brook, however, being present at his first introduction.

The rich man's devotion to the portionless Miss Cleveland, was too much talked of in the societies which they frequented, to leave the Earl any doubt that Mr. Somerville received him with a consciousness of his motives for seeking the intimacy: and he felt hurt, and almost indignant at what

appeared to him such an instance of tergiversation in one whom he had hitherto believed so firmly his friend. His delicacy, his good taste, independent of his love, revolted from the odious idea of seeing Adela encouraged to listen to a man in all respects, but affluence, so infinitely her inferior. His own continual and open intercourse in the family, was beginning, by many of the shrewdest observers, to be attributed to convenience and self-interest. It was known that Mrs. Somerville had admitted both his children beneath her roof, and had infinitely contributed by her assiduity and kindness to the recovery of Lord Ossely; and it was now asserted, that the Earl's conduct towards Miss Cleveland was expressive of no more than the affection of a partial and indulgent brother.

His deep and heart-felt interest in whatever related to her, was so quiet, and though unremitting, so devoid of glare and obtrusion, that its latent motive escaped the public eye. Her conduct was, in every particular, so truly consonant to his ideas of correct propriety, that, for distrustful observation when she was in society, he saw not

the remotest excuse. Grace, modesty, and the most perfect exemption from coquetry, marked her deportment wherever she appeared. Admiration neither disposed her to conceit, nor did impertinence or neglect depress her into insignificance. Married men, (amongst whom she more uniformly found partisans, than amongst bachelors looking out, as she was supposed to be doing herself, for an advantageous establishment) she invariably treated, when too assiduous, with a sort of ironical politeness that baffled and disconcerted them. Consequential and saucy girls of fashion, she calmly disdained; wealthy blockheads, publicly avowing their ambition to obtain a handsome wife, she frigidly discouraged; and antiquated beaux, proud of being seen in the train of youth and beauty, she laughed at, or overlooked. A few, a *very* few of a superior class, who sought her for her spirit and conversation, with no views of undue gallantry, selfishness, or vanity, she behaved to with the most friendly and distinguished complacency.

Seeing her thus courteous to all real merit, Lord Ennerdale's connections began to do

her the slight justice of believing, that she had no design upon his heart—and he began very seriously to fear, that she had herself no heart on which any design *could* succeed. The dust she trod on, he was persuaded, could not be more indifferent to her than Sir Patrick's gold—neither could the lightest breeze that fanned her cheek, be more calmly unheeded than had hitherto appeared to be his own attentions. How, and by whom would she at length be won? Was Talbot Cleveland the happy object for whom she reserved her tenderness? Or, marrying merely to please her family, would she accept Sir Patrick, and rest content with the reciprocation of those affections which her natural connections inspired? It was impossible! A torpidity of heart so exquisitely insipid, could never be the portion of the generous, animated and youthful Adela! "Her hour," cried he, "may not be yet arrived. But arrive it *must*. And, oh! that it may, at last, be *my* happy fate to effect its approach!"

CHAP. XI.

COUNSELLING.

THE dinner-visit of Sir Patrick Harley passed off with no peculiarity of incident to distinguish it from other visits, or from other dinners. Mr. Annesley, it is true, on beholding the baronet admitted with so few recommendations beyond those of a well-filled purse, to an intimacy at Mr. Somerville's, relapsed into worldly suspicions of the family disinterestedness, and half persuaded himself, that the *ingot* was marked, in case of a failure with Adela, as a prize for her widowed sister, the beautiful and brilliant Mrs. Erington. But Mrs. Erington, ignorant of every thing relating to him, except his name and his ugliness, turned from him with secret disgust, and directed all her voluntary attention to the other guests who formed the little party.

Being alone with Adela the next morning, she abruptly asked her, why, and how long, that frightful old Baronet had been admitted to visit in the family?—"There is prodigious bad taste," she added, "in

expending money and time upon the entertainment of such dull guests, in a city abounding with all that is gay, amusing, and agreeable; and I wonder that Elinor and you permit Somerville to encourage him."—

"Yesterday," replied Adela, "was Sir Patrick's first appearance here. I have often seen him at my uncle's, but unless you chuse to attract him by a few gracious smiles, he will probably never be a frequent visitor in this house."

"Oh, Heaven! The very sight of him is enough to scare away smiles and graces for an eternity! He is absolutely hideous, and has so little expression of countenance, such a total incapacity of saying or looking an agreeable thing, that it is quite impossible to forget his deformity."

"Hush, hush, Alicia—you will be very sorry to have held such irreverend language, when you hear how many thousand charms are centered in his strong box!—I have been assured, that he is the richest commoner in England."

"Alas! How lamentable, that wealth should be so betowed!—But if he is single

he is perhaps looking out for a helpmate. Do have him, Adela, and let me assist you to dispose of a little of his superfluous cash."

"I would do any thing in reason to oblige you," said Adela, laughing; "but this, I fear, is a flight of friendship sublimer than I can soar. Try and win him yourself, and don't be apprehensive of my asking to share his spoils."

"Oh, surely you need have no scruples on that subject, for, whoever consents to marry him, he must, in his secret heart, be assured, takes him only to make ducks and drakes of his money. I should not hesitate to half ruin such a creature, first, as a punishment for embittering to me the possession of his fortune by tacking to it the incumbrance of his ugly person, and next, for the pleasure of forcing him to fly from his creditors, and ridding me of the sight of his odious visage. But exclusive of this ponderous gentleman, do confess, that our party yesterday was insufferably stupid. Mr. Annesley was the best of the set; he really has some vivacity and spirit: but his wife is a poor little yea-and-nay

sort of body. She is pretty, and looks fashionable, and *comme il faut*, and that is all that can be said of her. Pray, is she inclined to be jealous? She is exactly the sort of woman I should expect that absurdity from."

"I never remarked in her the slightest tendency of the kind."

"I am sorry for it. Had she been at all prone to that folly, it might have infused a little life and animation into her, to have set on foot immediately a violent flirtation with her *caro sposo*. As it is, I will let him alone, and direct my whole attack against her charming brother-in-law. How could Julius ever find in his heart to take aim against the life of so elegant a creature?"

"Dear Alicia, never allude to that horrible duel!—I cannot hear of it without regret, and an aching heart!"

"Well, well—I had much rather give a good comfortable heart-ache to Lord Ennerdale than to you! But, somehow,—I am not quite sure that he is the kind of man I ever could make much impression upon. *you* might, I am persuaded, Adela; why don't you try the experiment?"

Adela, colouring a little, but affecting to laugh, answered—

"I *will* try, on condition that you teach me how to set about it."

"Ah, my dear little sister, if you had any thoughts of setting about it in good earnest, you would require no instructor in the business! I really am astonished at your want of enterprise. He seems to me exactly such a lover as you would approve;—he is handsome, young, lively, and accomplished; and besides all this, he is a peer. Have you never reflected upon any of these little advantages?—I hope you have not the preposterous humility of fancying yourself his inferior? Know, that with beauty, birth, and education, a woman is inferior to no man in the universe!"

"It can answer no purpose to preach this doctrine to me: you should seek to impress it upon the understanding of your male auditors."—

"I let them infer it from my easy manner of treating them; not that there is any denying the usefulness of telling men what is right, and proper, and good for them, in still plainer language than any looks will

speak. Now, if I took this matter in hand with sober seriousness, I should have a great notion of telling the rich, that the best thing they can do, is to chuse wives that are poor and pretty; and to the pennyless, I should think it an act of charity to recommend, a total blindness to every species of beauty but that of a wealthy dowager of three-score. I am sadly afraid, that in the common course of events, the very reverse of this good system is the case; heirs marry heiresses; and half-starved boys marry half-starved girls. How shall we reform these pernicious practices, my dear Adela?"

"Why, you must ascend an eminence, on a market-day, in some of the principal towns and villages of the kingdom, and proclaim your opinion to the multitude in an eloquent harangue."—

"Here comes one," cried Mrs. Erington, looking through the window, "whom I should have more pleasure in haranguing upon this subject, than half his sex put together. Lord Ennerdale has just driven up to the door in the prettiest-looking, gay sort of open carriage I ever saw. How I should delight in a drive through the Park,

perched at his side in that exquisite car!—Heigho! I wish I had a few of Sir Patrick's odd thousands!"—

"But remember, that they are only to be had by perching yourself at *his* side!"

"Very true: and I am not sure, that the nausea of that, would not induce me, in all humility, to prefer an umbrella and pattens to the most splendid equipage which he could offer me."—

Lord Ennerdale was now announced, and immediately made his appearance.

"Oh, my Lord," cried the gay widow, scarcely allowing him time to ask either her or Adela how they did, "what a delicious little vehicle you came in!"

"I drove it hither," answered he, "to give Algernon an airing. It is much my interest, you know," added he, addressing Adela, "to court him into all the good-humour possible, before I undertake with him the projected journey into Northumberland. I am half afraid of that expedition. Yesterday, when I insinuated to him that such a removal was in meditation, he made a terrible wry face, and declared that

he should not like to go away from hence at all."—

"Tell him," said Adela, smiling, "that he is going to a place where he will have nothing more to do with nurses or nursery-maids!—No assurance will so effectually reconcile him to the journey, for they are, at present, the confirmed objects of his antipathy."—

She then left the room, to go and announce to the little boy the indulgent motive of his father's visit.

"You may congratulate yourself, my Lord," said Mrs. Erington, when she was gone, "on not having been at liberty yesterday, to accept Mr. Somerville's invitation. I pitied poor Lady Isabella and Mr. Annesley, for that unwieldy baronet threw so oppressive a dulness over the day, that the air seems hardly yet to have recovered its lightness and elasticity."—

"Sir Patrick," said Lord Ennerdale, "is seldom spoken of with such severity by the young and the beautiful."—

"What claim has he to peculiar indulgence from those he so little resembles?"

"His profound adoration of both the attributes I have mentioned."

"Who could be flattered by adoration so stupidly testified? He says not a word, but dividing his worship between a plate-full of turbot, and a pretty female face, he alternately gazes at each with nearly equal tenderness, and leaves it doubtful at last which he prefers."

"Nay," resumed the Earl, with an air of mock gravity, "what higher compliment can he pay to a pretty face, than that of suffering it to enter into competition with the dearest inclination of his heart—good and costly cheer?"

"How supremely gratifying to female vanity! But let me tell you, my Lord, that the first man who presumed to make a merit of admitting *me* to any competition of the sort, I should send to dine at a tavern, and ogle the cook!"

She then, on Adela's re-appearance, enquired for Mrs. Somerville's visiting-book to make a list of persons to call upon, and gaily wishing Lord Ennerdale good morning, tripped away.

"I have brought you," said Adela, lead-

ing towards his father, "the now almost blooming Algernon, the most grateful and happy little boy in the world; and his sweet sister, far from repining at his good fortune, is almost equally delighted to see him so alert and gay."

"Tell her, my dear Miss Cleveland, that she shall very soon be indulged with the same gratification: but as Algernon has been an invalid, I thought, though 'a lady was in the case,' that the first airing was due to him."

"I will certainly give her this kind message. But now, for Algernon's sake, let me hurry you away before the sun loses any of its warmth and brightness."

"I am going this moment: but suffer me first, with an officiousness which you must not attribute to impertinence—suffer me to give you, what you so seldom require, a little caution." . . .

"On what subject?" interrupted Adela, somewhat alarmed.

"During your short absence from the room," resumed he, "a servant brought in a parcel of books, and said, that they came from Mrs. Elmer, who had sent them for

your amusement, as something quite new. I mechanically opened one of the volumes, and saw the title of a work, which, though written by a female, I am well persuaded you would never wish to read. It is probable that Mrs. Elmer has lent these books without having given herself time to ascertain their character:—but she is wrong in having done so;—and you, dear Miss Cleveland, will require no further hint, to avoid throwing away your leisure upon such unworthy trash."

"I am inexpressibly obliged to you for this warning," cried Adela, in the most grateful accent; "it is truly considerate and friendly: but shall I tell you how you might add to the obligation? Assist me to tie up the books in paper, and ring for a servant to convey them back to Mrs. Elmer's immediately."

Lord Ennerdale smiled at her impatience to get rid of the proscribed volumes, and said—

"What reason will you assign to Mrs. Elmer for returning her loan so very expeditiously?"

"I will simply tell her, that a friend as-

sured me, it was a publication which I should do better not to read.

"And if she enquires for that friend's name?"

"You shall inform me yourself what you would, in that case, wish me to answer."

"I would wish you, most upright and ingenuous of human beings! to do me so much credit as to tell her, that it was at *my* recommendation you forbore casting your eye over these ill-principled pages. She merits to hear, since so unguarded in her intended kindnesses, the impropriety of lending productions with whose tendency she is not distinctly acquainted. Had she, with equal thoughtlessness, sent this book to Eudocia, I should openly have acted the brother, and told her my opinion, *vivâ voce.*"

"It is enough, in the present instance, that you have avowed that opinion to *me.* I should be sorry were Mrs. Elmer to incur any mortification for an act which we agree in thinking was kindly meant, and from which your timely caution has warded off any mischief."

"Candid in your judgment of others, and open to conviction yourself, how much

real goodness and delicacy, amiable Adela, have you indicated during this little dialogue! Oh, that in all things, I possessed over you as much influence, as you allow me to exercise on a subject of mere literary taste!"

"You cannot," said Adela, a little embarrassed, "accuse me of having ever resisted your guidance when sensible of your wish to bestow it. But we may sometimes appear intractable when, in reality, we are only dull of understanding."

"I believe," cried the Earl, half-laughing, yet internally chagrined at her pretended unconsciousness, "it would be no very extravagant proof of rashness, to assert, that intractability is the spirit which solely actuates you at this moment! I have no great faith in the dullness of understanding you would plead.—You certainly are the most extraordinary instance of frankness, and something which is *not* frankness, that I ever met with in the same character!"

To Adela's great relief, young Ossely, tired of so long a delay, now began urging his father to depart; and having no pretence

for further procrastination, Lord Ennerdale unwillingly bade her good morning, took the child by the hand, and left the room. Adela instantly followed, laden with Mrs. Elmer's books, which she gave to a servant in the hall, with directions to carry them to that lady's house directly. Then, slowly re-ascending the stairs, and turning her head as she did so, she received from the Earl a parting bow as he mounted his carriage, after which, he gently touched the horses, and drove away.

Adela could not deny herself the gratification of relating to Mrs. Somerville in the course of the day, the purport of this friendly little conference.

" It proves," said the lady, highly pleased by the communication, " two very material points. First, it must convince you, that my opinion of Mrs. Elmer's inconsiderate character, was by no means too severe; and secondly, it must exculpate Lord Ennerdale from all suspicion of wishing you to pay undue court to her. This early friend of yours, Adela,—this amiable Algernon, certainly thinks, that you have a *soul* to be

saved, though, by this time, I believe, he is pretty positively convinced, that you have no *heart* either to save or to lose!"

Adela laughed, but hastened away; and two days afterwards, young Ossely, under the protection of his father, commenced his northern journey.

The parting scene between him and his two fair patronesses, was rendered distressing in the highest degree, by the extreme reluctance which he evinced to quit them. Round Adela, in particular, he clung with a fondness and affliction which no promises or soothings could abate. She had, unwittingly, indeed, but decidedly, superseded her sister in his affection. Mrs. Somerville had repeatedly found it necessary to check his little humours, and to dispute his will: Adela, however, deeming it no part of *her* duty to play the preceptress, had stolen away during these unpleasant, but salutary contests, and had awaited a serener moment to bestow upon him her attention. Then, all compliance, sweetness and good-humour, she had again appeared before him, the indulgent partaker of his pastimes, the smiling auditress of his childish joys, or the

gentle soother of his transient sorrows. No restrictions, no remonstrances ever proceeded from her lips, no austerity ever sat upon her brow. She came like a brilliant sunshine after a depressing gloom; she re-animated him to gaiety, she dispelled all lurking resentment from his youthful heart, and imparted to it a warmth of trust and gladness, which she only, in an equal degree, had ever possessed the power of communicating to him.

So vehement was his anguish at the idea of leaving her, and so resolute his determination to cling to her till drawn away by absolute force, that Mrs. Erington, partly from compassion, and partly from an ever-ready inclination to engage in an idle frolic, said—

"You have so strangely bewitched this poor child, Adela, that the least you can do, is to go with him the first stage of his journey.—I will accompany and take care of you back."

Young Ossely understood enough of this proposal to know, that it implied a scheme for delaying his separation from his favourite; he fervently strained his arms round her

neck, and half smiling, half in tears, said eagerly—

"Oh, do, do—pray do go with me!"

"I wish," cried Adela, to her inconsiderate sister, "you had not mentioned this impracticable project in poor Algernon's hearing. At the end of the stage he would probably be just as reluctant to part from us as he is at this moment, and there would be all this scene to go through again."

"Perhaps not," said Lord Ennerdale; "perhaps the variety of objects on the road would dissipate his thoughts, and lessen his regret. But let us refer the matter to Mrs. Somerville. I am too much interested in the event of the deliberation, to vote with any impartiality."

Mrs. Somerville, thus applied to, said very frankly—

"I am quite of Adela's opinion, that the scheme is unnecessary and ill-judged. Besides, how are the two ladies to get back?—In a hired chaise? And without any servant?"

"No, no," cried her husband; "my groom shall attend them on horseback."

"Come, then, Adela," resumed Mrs.

Erington, "make no more fuss, but run up stairs, and get yourself ready. You are as circumspect and slow in your resolutions, as if the prosperity of an empire depended upon their wisdom."

Adela, much perplexed, looked at Mrs. Somerville for further assistance. Her secret inclination impelled her one way—her delicacy and diffidence urged her another—and finding that every body waited for her decision, she said—

"My dear Elinor, the whole morning will be consumed in debate, if you do not settle something for me. I will go, or stay, just as you advise."

"Well, then—I believe you must indulge the spoilt babies, and resolve upon accompanying them. But how is it possible, Alicia, that you can so vehemently have set your heart upon this useless excursion?"

"I shall not pretend," said Mrs. Erington, laughing, "to ascribe my eagerness solely to sensibility for Lord Ossely's distress; yet, I really *am* sorry for him, too. But the weather is so beautiful, that as one of Mr. Somerville's horses is lame, I am

glad to avail myself of this opportunity to obtain a morning drive."

She then, exulting at the success of her perseverance, flew to prepare for their departure, and, in a very few minutes, returning, arm in arm with the still half-reluctant Adela, Lord Ennerdale attended them to his travelling coach, and the youthful party drove away.

CHAP. XII.

ENCOUNTERS.

Adela placed her affectionate little friend on her lap, and anxious to avert the renewal of his grief when the inevitable moment of separation should arrive, cheered him with assurances, in a low voice, that at the end of six weeks or two months they should meet again. She promised to write him a long letter, which Mrs. Blandford, the lady to whom he was going, would have the good-nature to read to him—

"And in it," continued she, "I will tell you every thing that we are doing, and every affectionate thought, that, when I am

alone, comes into my head about you.—And, besides, I will try and recollect some of Lady Harriet's merry little sayings; and when you hear all this read, you will fancy yourself amongst us. Shall you like such a letter, my Algernon?"

"Oh, yes, yes," cried he, with sparkling eyes, "I shall like it better than any thing in the world! And you won't mind whether I am good or naughty? You'll send it all the same, won't you?"

Adela smiled at this provident enquiry, and said—

"You don't mean, I hope, my dear Algernon, to be naughty?"

"No," said he, after a moment's hesitation, "I don't *mean* it, now; but, perhaps, I mayn't be able to help it sometimes, and Mrs. Somerville never would promise me any thing, unless I told her that I would be quite, quite good."

"I believe she was very right, Algernon; but as I am only your playfellow, you know, I do not pretend to be so good a judge as my sister, of the properest times to indulge you."

Lord Ennerdale was seated opposite to

them, and though often disturbed in his wish to listen to their dialogue, by the ceaseless loquacity of Mrs. Erington, attended with much delight to all that she would allow him to hear of it. Algernon, thus lured by degrees, to forget his cares, had placed his interesting little face at the window, and was calling upon Adela to observe the different objects that were passing, when the carriage stopped at a turnpike, and, in a gentleman who rode up to it at the same instant, they all distinguished Julius Cleveland. He, too, saw, and was not slow in recognizing them. The arms on the coach-pannel informed him immediately whose it was, and the appearance of his two sisters within it, accompanied by its owner, produced a revulsion in his blood, that flushed his face with the deepest crimson. He betrayed no voluntary sign, however, of having any knowledge of their persons, but after a cold and haughty survey of the whole party, put spurs to his horse, and galloped towards town.

"There's a bright pattern of fraternal courtesy for you!" exclaimed Mrs. Erington, having angrily for some moments looked

after him—"this is but the second glance I have had of him since I came to town, and a most satisfactory one it has been! He never approaches my brother-in-law's door; and once, when I called upon him in Hertford Street, he was either out, or chose to be denied. Does he mean, I wonder, absolutely to break with us all? Poor simple boy! Where does he expect to meet with more submissive observers of his perpetual whims?"

Adela, who saw traces of indignation in Lord Ennerdale's countenance, pressed her foot upon Mrs. Erington's, and directed towards her a look enjoining silence, too significant to be misunderstood, though too momentary to be observed by their companion. The incautious Alicia unwillingly suffered herself to be checked, and Julius was no more mentioned.

But Adela was destined, during this short excursion, so wholly uninstigated by herself, to encounter every individual whom she least wished, in her present situation, to behold.

At the distance of about four miles from town, the carriage which she was in, was

met by an open barouche, containing a party of ladies, whom, on a nearer approach, she discovered to be Mrs. Cleveland and her two daughters. The astonished trio, manifested at the first glance, that they knew her, by the eagerness with which they stared in at the window, and by the perseverance with which, after they had passed, they were remarked by Mrs. Erington, to be looking after them—

"We shall have the credit, Lord Ennerdale," said she, "since this is the great northern road, of being reported to have engaged with you on a little trip into Scotland.—No one is more likely to set such a rumour afloat than our busy little cousin, Jemima. 'Tis pity that some part of the probability of the anecdote will be destroyed, by there being two ladies with you, instead of one. I fancy, people seldom go to Gretna Green in a family party."

"But since you say," cried the Earl, "that we shall have all the credit of the adventure, whether we prosecute it or not, suppose we continue our journey upon our present sociable plan, and at its termination,

cast lots to decide which of the two sisters will do me the honour to accept me."

"By the time we had discovered, 'how happy you could be with either,' and how perfectly impartial you meant to be, I suspect that we should both beg to come back again as unshackled as we went!"

Lord Ennerdale had no time to answer this speech, for at that moment Mrs. Erington, casting her eyes towards the road, hastily exclaimed—

"There's Talbot Cleveland!" and without waiting to explain her purpose, she impetuously called to one of the servants who attended them, and bade him order the postillions to stop. They did so, and at the same instant, Talbot perceiving her, gave a similar direction to his own driver, and leaning forward, hailed her with the utmost appearance of satisfaction.

"I am delighted to see you," cried Mrs. Erington, "we are only going out of town for an hour or two, and perhaps we shall meet again in the course of the day. Come and dine at my sister Somerville's."

"You are very good, but I must find

out what they are all doing at my father's, before I can make any positive engagement. You speak, however, in a regal style perfectly unintelligible to me. Who have you with you to make up the number *we*? I descry, at present, only your fair self."

Mrs. Erington then drew back, and Adela in her turn exhibiting her face at the window, very cordially addressed him, and expressed the pleasure which it gave her to see him—

"Am I not a most unfortunate fellow," cried Talbot, colouring with surprise and delight on beholding her, "thus to meet you proceeding in *one* direction, whilst I am obliged to proceed in *another*?"

"Adela," cried Mrs Erington, a sudden thought darting into her imagination which she took no time to weigh or consider, "suppose we here bid Lord Ennerdale farewell, and go back to town under the protection of Talbot? Where is the use of proceeding quite to the end of the stage?"

Lord Ennerdale looked confounded at this proposal, but was utterly silent, awaiting in painful uncertainty the decision of Adela. The first sentence which she uttered, stung

him to the soul—it expressed, an almost unhesitating assent to Mrs. Erington's plan; and Talbot, who occupied his chaise quite alone, declared himself enchanted to receive them.

Little Algernon, meanwhile, too much surprised by the hurry and bustle of this premature separation, to feel it so acutely as perhaps he might have done a more deliberate parting, suffered Adela hastily, but tenderly, to embrace him, and then, in speechless consternation, saw her and her sister alight. His father, in whose face she felt too conscious to look up, gravely wished them a pleasant drive—waited to see them seated in Talbot's chaise, and bade his postillions go on.

To have been guilty towards Lord Ennerdale of any appearance of cavalier treatment, was so foreign to Adela's accustomed practice, that when removed to the new vehicle in which she was now to proceed, she could scarcely believe, that an arrangement so abrupt had been sanctioned by her consent. Yet, her successive *rencontres* with persons disposed to view every incident of her life, in which Lord Ennerdale was at all impli-

cated, through the medium of suspicion and prejudice; a degree of youthful impatience at the uneasiness which she had endured from the moment these persons had seen her; the intimacy and near relationship subsisting between herself and Talbot—these feelings and reasons all induced her to hope, that however capricious her sudden desertion might make her appear, there was in it nothing either very blameable, or much to be wondered at. Depressed, however, by doubts of the propriety of her hasty proceedings—half approving, and half condemning herself, she took scarcely any part in the conversation that was passing between her sister and Talbot; but absent and disturbed, sat painfully meditating upon the whole transaction.

Mrs. Somerville received the friendly party, on their arrival in Cumberland Place, with the utmost cheerfulness, and seemed much pleased at the opportune meeting with Talbot, which had exempted her lovely sisters from the necessity of returning to town alone. She seconded the invitation to dinner which Mrs. Erington had given him; and Talbot, unable to resist her frank cor-

diality, no longer hesitated to accept it, but ran home to see his father and mother, and promised to return, whatever other engagement might have been made for him.

Adela impatiently sought an opportunity, throughout the whole day, of conversing with him unreservedly upon the subject of Lady Rosalvan. Talbot appeared not, however, so desirous to gratify her in this particular as she either wished or had expected. His answers to all her enquiries, were vague and general. The only positive information which he chose to give her, was, that her mother was perfectly well, and that he had safely delivered the letter to her with which he had been entrusted. Why she had sent to that letter no answer, and what had passed at his interview with her, he was obviously unwilling to detail.

Sighing, and disappointed, Adela left him, resolved, however, on some future occasion, to return to the charge, and to insist upon knowing the utmost extent of the evil, whatever it was, which he had to communicate.

Lord Ennerdale was absent from town about a week, in the course of which Mrs. Erington, who, notwithstanding all her

flightiness, was by no means divested of attention to her own interest, had succeeded in making Adela the unsuspicious instrument of a confused and most extraordinary sort of project afloat in her brain, to supplant, in the heart of Sir Patrick Harley, this thankless object of his present veneration. She saw clearly that Adela utterly disregarded him—and still more so, in reality did she! But not like her, did she disregard his fortune. A handsome wife to match with a magnificent habitation, and a most sumptuous establishment, was what she continually heard he was solicitously in search of. She was as handsome as her insensible sister, very little older, and a great deal better versed in that sort of wisdom, which is requisite to compass a selfish design. Concluding that the Baronet had only waited to declare himself to Adela, till he perceived in her some symptoms of a disposition to hear him with favour, Mrs. Erington determined, that if flattery could avail, to *her* he should openly proclaim that passion, which, to her sister, had hitherto been only silently professed.

The return, at this time, of Talbot Cleve-

land to London, was a favourable circumstance for the furtherance of her views. He was as frequent a visitor in Cumberland Place as the assiduous, though laconic Sir Patrick. She knew herself not to be the principal magnet of attraction to either—but Talbot was, in Adela's estimation, so unequivocally preferable to the Baronet, that during every accidental absence from the room of Mrs. Somerville, the task fell upon the fair widow of exerting herself for Sir Patrick's entertainment. Though he was considerably vapoured at sight, so continually, of a young and agreeable visitor seated beside the lady of his affection, yet, the recollection of their near affinity, somewhat reconciled him to the circumstance; and he was well content, whilst complacently engaged in contemplating the beauty of Adela, to benefit by the attentive politeness of her sister.

When rallied on her patient endurance of so unamusing a personage, Alicia, with a very good grace, laughed it off, and declared that she was plying the Baronet with compliments, in order to obtain from him the confirmation of a painfully-extorted promise to give a ball.

It happened one morning, that at Sir Patrick's usual hour of paying his now almost diurnal visit, Mrs. Somerville and Adela were both absent from home. On hearing however, that Mrs. Erington was within, he solemnly paced up stairs to enquire what was her plan and Miss Cleveland's for the evening.

"The old plan, Sir Patrick—we go to the Opera. Shall you be there?"

He answered in the affirmative; and then asked, whither her two sisters were gone.

"To see a picture upon sale at an auction room. Mr. Annesley said so much about it yesterday, that he raised their curiosity, and he has now escorted them to view it himself for the third or fourth time."

Sir Patrick made some further enquiries relative to this admired picture, and then, with an air of conscious satisfaction, said—

"I yesterday became its purchaser, and it was sent home this very morning."

"How very cruel of you, Sir Patrick, to complete the bargain before my sisters had seen it!—But was it not an immense price?"

He mentioned the sum, which was in fact enormous, but coolly added—

"I have one or two which cost me more."

"How much Adela would delight in viewing your collection!—If you had any gallantry, dear Sir Patrick, you would give a breakfast some morning, and invite her to it, to make her amends for having possessed yourself of this picture at the very time that she took the trouble of vainly going to see it."

"I should be too happy," answered he, much flattered by this suggestion, "if you and your sisters would so highly honour me."

"Oh, I will be answerable for their acquiescence, and, therefore, let it be considered from this moment, as a settled thing. But do not tell Adela that I first started the idea; your politeness, you know, would lose half its merit; and, besides,—she would think it a mere joke, and refuse the invitation."—

Sir Patrick, thanking her for the hint, promised discretion, and then his dextrous counsellor added:

"But do, at once, fix some day for this scheme. We are dying to see your house!"

"Are you disengaged the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, perfectly; write us a note then, as soon as you return home, and as a motive for the invitation, say that you are desirous of hearing Miss Cleveland's opinion of your new purchase. I don't know whether she is much of a judge, but you are sensible that all ladies are fond of a little flattery."

The Baronet smiled at this novel remark; and authorizing Mrs. Erington to include any friend she chose in the invitation, he took his leave.

When Mrs. Somerville and Adela returned home, their fair sister told them that Sir Patrick had called during their absence, but totally abstained from any allusion to the subject of their short conference.

Adela, a little angrily, complained of the useless trouble which he had occasioned the —

"He has already," she cried, "obtained possession of the picture that we went to see; he monopolizes every thing that is costly and rare, for the paltry pride, I

verily believe, of out-bidding less opulent competitors.

"If he would marry," said Mrs. Somerville, "the evil of this encroaching system would in some degree be remedied, since all the precious things which his huge house engulfs, would then be open to general inspection. They are now only visible to his male associates."—

"Nothing more passed upon the subject, nor was Sir Patrick, his house, or his collection again thought of till the projected invitation arrived.

Adela, the instant that she heard it read, declared her intention not to accept it.—

"Pshaw, nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Erington, "what should prevent your accepting it? Are you afraid of forfeiting your reputation by entering the house of a bachelor, in company with your two sisters?"

"Oh, as to my going," cried Mrs. Somerville, "that is entirely out of the question. I should equally dislike the fuss, the form, and the fatigue of the thing."—

"Why did you tell him, my dear Ali-

cia," said Adela, "that I ever had any wish to see his new picture?"

"He asked whither you and Elinor were gone? I could imagine no sort of reason for concealing from him the truth, and this invitation seems to be its natural consequence. Upon my word, Adela, if you persist in your refusal, I shall think you either very prudish, or positively ill-natured. I have an amazing inclination to see his fine house; yet if both you and Elinor decline accompanying me, how can I possibly go and breakfast with him alone? Come," added she, looking round at Mr. and Mrs. Somerville, and Talbot, who happened to be present, "let us call a cabinet council, and confer upon this matter gravely and deliberately. You, Elinor, shall give the first opinion."—

"In that case, I shall say, that if Adela has no wish to go, it would be kind not to press her."—

"But would there be the smallest impropriety in her going?"

"Possibly not—but"....

"Oh, no *buts!* Pass we on now to our male counsellors.—What say you, Talbot?"

"I would echo the very words of Mrs. Somerville."—

"Then you might just as well be completely mute: an echo, you know, never has any meaning. I hate such nugatory speakers! Is it your intention, Mr. Somerville, to class amongst them? If it is—nod, or hold up your hand; but waste not your breath upon words which, after all, will only be sounds without sense."—

"You are marvellously flippant, my dear sister!" cried Mr. Somerville: "however, on the present occasion, I am willing to lean towards your side of the question. My dear Adela," continued he, "in declining Sir Patrick's invitation, you are your own enemy. I assure you, that the sight of his mansion will afford you great entertainment; and though, on his account, I am perfectly indifferent whether you go or not, yet, on your own, I am anxious that you should not throw away such an opportunity of being amused."

"Or of obliging her sister, you should have added," cried Mrs. Erington, laughing; "but, Adela, I will persecute you no longer. If you can prevail upon yourself to go with-

out great reluctance, I should be delighted; but an extorted compliance would give me nothing but pain."—

This conversation, and others, subsequent to it, at length conquered Adela's resistance, though not her secret disinclination to the scheme—and she accompanied her sister and Mrs. Ross, whom they invited to be of the party, to the house of Sir Patrick Harley. Mr. Somerville and Talbot Cleveland attended them.

The preparations which the Baronet had made for their reception, were elegant and tasteful, at once evincing the high sense he had of the honour they conferred upon him, and the only species of judgment which he possessed. As master of the revels to a magnificent and voluptuous Prince, he would have shone unrivalled. The sort of cares attached to setting forth a banquet or adorning a saloon for festivity, seemed to be his natural vocation; and so serious was the importance which he connected with these offices, that, like the famous martyr to false honour, *Vatel*, steward to the great *Condé*, it is scarcely to be doubted, he would have deemed the delay of an expected dish of fish

for the King's dinner, a disgrace which nothing but his blood could wipe out.*

Adela, who, as it has been said, had set forward on this party with unaffected, though silent, since unavailing reluctance, was out of spirits the whole morning. Talbot alone seemed to participate in her feelings. A cloud, however light, however transient upon that brow which he had hitherto been accustomed to behold beaming with the serenest sun-shine, dejected and perturbed him. He hovered incessantly round her; and once whilst she was standing at a window, detached from the rest of the group, and indifferent to the display of all Sir Patrick's costly acquisitions, he stole towards her, and ventured gently to enquire the cause of her obvious disquiet.

Adela affected to deny the charge, and in truth, her meditations were not of a nature which she could very readily have explained.

She was reflecting upon the strange appearance this unnecessary and somewhat

* This wretched man ran a sword through his body in despair at the above disappointment. Louis XIV. was the monarch for whom the repast was preparing. Ten minutes after Vatel expired, the fish arrived.

questionable visit would have in the eyes of Lord Ennerdale, should it ever become known to him; she was lamenting the encouragement it was calculated to give to Sir Patrick's hopes, and sincerely regretting likewise, that in defiance of her utmost endeavours to escape distinction, the Baronet would persist in considering her as the principal personage present. Mrs. Erington, it is true, relieved her by her own civility to him, from the pain of being often forced into conversation; yet, she observed, that his eyes followed her in all directions; and whatever compliments were paid to his statues, his pictures, his carvings, his gildings, or his Mosaics, he seemed restless and unsatisfied, till Adela's faint commendations, or Adela's compelled smile, confirmed, and gave value to the flattering encomiums of her companions.

This solicitude for her particular applause soon drew him to the window near which she and Talbot were conversing. On his approach, the young man rejoined Mrs. Ross and Alicia; but Sir Patrick, supplied with more than usual eloquence (courage was not what he had ever been so deficient in as ap-

propriate words to express his meaning); elated by her presence beneath his princely roof, and secretly confiding in the influence which such an exhibition of wealth and magnificence could not fail to procure their possessor—Sir Patrick seizing the favourable moment, and smiling in her face with all the expression which his visage could assume, suddenly said—

"I have been thinking, for some time past, charming Miss Cleveland, that there is now but one thing which this house greatly requires. Can you guess what I mean?"

"It is not easy to think of any deficiency, Sir Patrick, in the midst of so profuse a display of every luxury and convenience."

"But these are inanimate and uninteresting possessions, compared to the remaining blessing left for me to covet! Surely, you must agree with me, that such a habitation merits and demands a—mistress!"

The enamoured Baronet put so much emphasis upon these last words, and wore an air so extremely significant, that Adela, blushing, and distressed how to answer him, cast her eyes in every direction but that

which exposed her to encounter his. A carriage was approaching at the moment—she mechanically glanced a look towards it, and the countenance which met her view from its window, substituted in her cheek the paleness of vexation for the crimson of embarrassment. It was Lord Ennerdale whom she beheld, just arrived in town, and now driving to his own door, nearly opposite to the house of Sir Patrick Harley.

As he was alighting, Mr. Somerville, unsuspicious of the nature of the Baronet's conference with his sister, approached to ask what sort of vehicle had, with such rapidity, been driving into the street?

Adela had no voice to utter a syllable; she wished herself away from the house, away from the spot where she stood, but she seemed spell-bound and unable to move. Sir Patrick, provoked at the interruption, turned sullenly from Mr. Somerville, and walked towards the two ladies in an adjoining room.

Meanwhile, Lord Ennerdale having descended from his carriage, was seen in a few moments approaching one of the drawing-room windows of his own house, with no other design, as it first appeared, than

that of taking a survey of the weather. But his eyes, ere long, wandered to the mansion of Sir Patrick; and Adela, then, with ill-timed quickness, retreated. Mr. Somerville however, kept his post, and smiled and nodded with an air of real satisfaction at the Earl's return. His greetings were answered with no corresponding looks of cheerfulness; Lord Ennerdale had never worn an aspect so cold and distant since Mr. Somerville had first known him. He remained but a very few minutes in sight, and did not again render himself visible whilst Adela's irksome visit lasted.

CHAP. XIII.

ABRUPTNESS.

It was now the fixed determination of Adela, to confide to Mrs. Somerville her suspicions of Sir Patrick's attachment, and to consult with her on the fittest measures to be pursued, in order to dissipate the unfounded hopes which the sudden civilities of that lady's husband might have contributed to excite.

But on arriving in Cumberland-Place, the first intelligence that awaited them, was, that Mrs. Somerville had been taken ill during their absence, though she had strictly ordered that no information of the circumstance should be communicated to her husband and sisters, whilst they were absent from home.

News of such a nature, it will easily be believed, drove from Adela's thoughts all remembrance of self, and left her sensible to nothing but the tenderest anxiety for the safety of a sister so justly beloved. The house was, of course, closed against visitors the whole day—a day which not only Adela, Mrs. Erington and their brother-in-law, but every member of the establishment passed in alternate hope and terror. The gentle and judicious Elinor, was adored by her dependents, for hers were virtues and endearing qualities so genuine and consistent, that, after diffusing animation and complacency throughout the brilliant circle of a drawing-room, she knew how to conciliate the love, mingled with respect, of the humblest of her domestics.

At length, the doubts, the fears, the agi-

tation that harassed every bosom, gave place to grateful delight. Mrs. Erington had the unspeakable pleasure of being the first to announce to Mr. Somerville and Adela, the birth of a little boy, and the safety of his mother. The news spread rapidly through the household, and never was a collection of happier faces beheld. Mr. Somerville gave orders that a liberal testimony of his joy should be distributed amongst them; he embraced the tearful yet smiling Adela, —cut capers round the room with her more wildly delighted sister,—and, as a further solace to his overflowing heart, ran up into the nursery to communicate to his two little girls the birth of their young brother.

During the whole ensuing fortnight, Adela dedicated every hour to domestic engagements, and neither wished for, nor partook in any species of external gaiety. Lord Ennerdale, with a solicitude almost fraternal, sent daily enquiries, and during the latter portion of this time, though Adela saw him not, being in her sister's room, he called repeatedly upon Mr. Somerville. Talbot Cleveland dined once, and occasionally spent the evening in Cumberland

Place: but no one else was admitted beyond the hall door. Mrs. Erington, though delighting in engagements abroad, detested the trouble of receiving formal visitors at home; and Adela forgot that such people as visitors existed.

Yet the restless Alicia, though perhaps not quite so much immersed in dissipation as usual, was far from being such a recluse as her more temperate sister. Her evenings were nearly all spent from home, and in the morning she amused Mrs. Somerville with details of what she had heard and seen, or indulged herself in the pleasure of affecting to laugh at Adela's faithful admirer, Sir Patrick Harley—

"He languishes," cried she, "to see you shine forth again, and talks to me of nothing else.—In return for the patience with which I prevail upon myself to hear him, I should not at all wonder, if the ball which I have been so long trying to make him give, should very speedily take place. —By the way, Adela, talking of balls,—won't you go to Lady Isabella Annesley's?"

"When is it?"

"I wonder whether you have really forgotten, or whether this question proceeds from missish affectation! You have no idea how suspicious it sounds, nor how amazingly conscious you look, at this very moment, of your own duplicity!—Why the ball, my dear child, is next Thursday, and I advise you to go to it by all means. Elinor, by that time, will be almost able to dance herself, and I am sure she does not wish to shut you up any longer. I'll tell you what, Adela, if you stay at home drinking caudle, and stirring pap, till my sister's own confinement is over, people will swear that *you* have had a child too. And where will you find godfathers for both the brats? Elinor, you know, has engaged Lord Ennerdale for her's; so I believe that you must, for yours, make application to Sir Patrick Harley. Poor man, he would look a little astounded at such a solicitation from the correct Miss Cleveland! Yet, I dare say, the habit of ostentation is so inveterate in him, that he would make magnificent christening presents. But pray, would you give the poor baby its sponsor's

ugly name? And how, if it was a girl, could that matter be arranged? Would you call it *Patrica?*"

"Yes—and wish it no securer guardian of its virtue, than a face and manner as disagreeable as its godfather's!"

"Oh, poor dear Sir Patrick!—*I* thought him ugly once, but the view of his house, and of all the pretty valuables which it contains, has almost compelled me to recant the injurious opinion. A wooden idol, when thickly burnished over with gold, and placed in a gorgeous temple, attracts worshippers, whatever may be the deformity of its features, or the intrinsic worthlessness of its materials."

"Might it not be asked, without any great impropriety," said Adela, half smiling, "which, in such case, is the most respectable—the idol, or its worshipper?"

Mrs. Erington laughed, but said that she had no time to decide the question at that moment: and Adela, urged as much by her own wishes, as by the joint persuasion of both her sisters, determined to accept Lady Isabella's invitation.

The day preceding this pleasant engage-

ment, Julius, for the first time since Mrs. Somerville's confinement, paid a visit in Cumberland Place. His treatment of Adela was cold and ungracious: but to the two other ladies, he was somewhat more cordial.—On being reproached by them for so seldom shewing himself, he promised, unless his father, whom he now hourly expected, arrived that day in town, he would dine with them. None of the party knew till thus informed of it, that Mr. Cleveland was on his journey. The two elder sisters expressed much satisfaction at the news; but Adela, ever conscious, at that name, of a sensation of awe, said nothing;—yet would have given millions to have felt equally entitled to rejoice.

After waiting for Julius nearly an hour, the family had just assembled round the dinner-table, when he abruptly entered. He said, in excuse for his tardiness, that his father alighted in Hertford Street at the very instant that he was meditating to set out:—

"I would then," continued he, "have given up my conditional engagement; but the proposal was opposed, though my father

kept me so long to hear all the grievances which he had met with upon the road, that I began to think, as he had already dined himself, I should lose all chance of obtaining a meal any where."

Mr. Somerville and Alicia now earnestly enquired how the traveller looked, and what sort of spirits he appeared to be in.

"Oh, he looks as well as ever, for aught I see," cried Julius,—"not quite so youthful and handsome, perhaps, as his evergreen brother: but they both get a dip in Medea's cauldron once in seven years, and are the finest pair of beaux immortal, I ever beheld.—His spirits, I can say nothing about; they are as good as usual: but after all, they have never deserved the name, since I have known him. He talks, and listens, and moves about, and performs all the accustomed actions of a living man, save laughing! I cannot remember any occasion on which I ever heard him proceed to such an excess; and I am very certain, that with a little retrospective meditation, I could exactly specify the number of times that I have, in one and twenty years, seen him smile!"

"Your exuberant gaiety," said Mr. Somerville, "probably overpowers him."

"I assure you, very honestly, that when he and I are *tête-à-tête*, I give him mighty little reason for that accusation!—I love my father—I have no fear of him—and yet, for the life and soul of me, I can never help sinking into vapourishness if I am left too long alone with him. He pretends to no wit himself, and certainly has not, in any degree, the faculty of causing it in others."

Julius accompanied Mr. Somerville into the drawing-room to tea, and spent the greatest part of the evening with his family. He said that he was going out of town in two days, but expected to be back in less than a week; and if Mr. Somerville was not already better provided, he begged that he might have the pleasure of standing godfather to his young nephew.

This offer considerably embarrassed Mr. Somerville, who was amply stored, in the persons of Lord Ennerdale and Mr. Annesley, with sponsors for the new-born heir, and who yet felt almost equally reluctant either to refuse his brother-in-law, or to inform

him who were the friends by whom his request had been anticipated. However, he saw no means of avoiding the acknowledgment, and after many cordial thanks, sincerely explained the state of the case.

The countenance of Julius fell on receiving this intelligence, and he recovered not his good-humour the whole evening. Mr. Annesley, one of the nearest connections, and the most intimate friend of Lord Ennerdale, was almost as abhorrent to him as Lord Ennerdale himself: and both their names were hateful to his ears.

Actuated by none of the foresight of art, or the promptitude of habitual mystery, Adela had omitted to remove from observation the card of invitation which had been sent to her and Mrs. Erington by Lady Isabella. It lay upon the chimney, with two or three others, and Julius, in his progress round the room, mechanically taking up whatever struck his sight, espied and began reading this card.

No sooner were its contents ascertained, than flinging it disdainfully down, he snatched up a light, and said abruptly to Adela—

"I want to speak with you:—come into the next room."

Adela, though not much pleased at being summoned in so dry a tone of command, arose and followed him.

"Once more," said he, as soon as they were by themselves, "I will be fool enough to try my influence over your mind! Nothing can be less sanguine than my hopes of prevailing: but it may do some good to prepare you for what you have to expect, if you obstinately persist in refusing to listen to me. I see, amongst your other invitations, a card for a ball to-morrow, at the Annesleys. I suppose, you fully mean to go?"

"Yes, we do."

"Then, let me apprise you, that of all the engagements which, so immediately on my father's arrival, you *could* accept, I know of none that would so deeply and irreconcileably offend him!"

"And why, my dear Julius?"

"For this plain reason: that the Annesleys are connected with Ennerdale! Your extraordinary abode in Portman Square, he is probably unacquainted with; at least, *I* never communicated it to him, and it is unlikely that any one else should. But in

London, his own eye will be upon you. He mixes much in the world, when his health will permit it, and hears whatever passes in houses of fashion. This ball will be no secret to him, and through some channel or other, you may rest assured, that he will learn you were present at it. Are you perfectly indifferent to the impression which, at the very outset of his residence in London, such a report will produce upon his mind?"

"This is a cruel question, Julius, and implies a doubt which I have never provoked! You *know* that I have the greatest dread of doing any thing which might strengthen or confirm my father's aversion. But an action so immaterial as this,—an engagement, which, were they both in health, both my sisters would accept, I cannot see why it should be a so much greater trespass in me to accept likewise."

"You are less undiscerning where your secret inclinations are less interested! However, I have done,—if you chuse to go, take the consequence."

"Tell me what the consequence will be! Tell me why there is more impropriety in

seeing Lady Isabella and Mr. Annesley at their own house, than in meeting them continually here?"

"Lady Isabella and Mr. Annesley!" repeated Julius, ironically—"and why so affectedly studious to omit the name of Ennerdale—of your pre-determined partner, perhaps?"

"Indeed he is not! I have never seen him since the invitation arrived."

"Then see him not to-morrow. Feed not his vanity by going in search of his society! When you meet him here, it may be supposed that you are a passive member of the family, intent neither upon alluring nor repulsing him. If you run in search of him amongst his own connections—if, forgetting or disregarding the disapprobation of your father and your brother, you force yourself upon his attention—what conclusions do you not give that father and brother a right to draw? Alicia must do as she pleases—she is impenetrable against remonstrance, and too jealous of her own independence to pay any regard to the wishes of her connections. Is that the case with you, Adela?"

"No, certainly!" replied she. And then, after a short silence, she added—"since you make so urgent a point of influencing me in this affair, I will, though with considerable regret, send an excuse to Lady Isabella. For the paltry consideration of a ball, more or less, it is hardly worth while, my dear Julius, to run the risk of a serious quarrel with you."

Julius, almost hopeless of success, was struck by the kindness of this answer, and gratified by the look of perfect good-humour with which it was uttered. He shook her by the hand; called her a dear girl, and returned with her into the front room, highly pleased at the termination of their conference.

When it was known, the next day, that Adela had abandoned all intention of going in the evening to Portman Square, both her sisters attributed the change in her purpose to the interference of Julius, and blamed her unsparingly for her too great facility. She neither acknowledged nor denied the charge, but adhered immoveably to her present decision—and endeavoured also to adhere to it without internal murmuring.

Yet some strength of mind was necessary to accomplish this. There were individuals who would be present at this ball, whom she earnestly wished to see; she was fond of dancing; at Mr. Annesley's, she was almost assured of being engaged by such partners as she most highly approved, and a longer intermission than usual in her amusements, would have given a double zest to the expected gaiety of the evening. But it was not to be—and afraid of trusting herself to too much meditation, she determined not to spend a moment of the day either in solitude or inactivity.

When Mrs. Erington was ready to set out, finding that she could not, quite so philosophically as she had hoped, bear to see her in her ball attire, Adela devised some pretext to avoid entering the drawing-room till after her departure.

Talbot Cleveland had dined that day in Cumberland Place, and not being amongst the number of those who were invited to the ball, Mrs. Somerville asked him to spend an hour or two quietly with her and Adela in the dressing-room.

He accepted the proposal with pleasure;

but afraid of fatiguing his friendly hostess, would have departed early. Mrs. Somerville, finding that he had no other engagement, opposed the design, and said—

"Since you are so apprehensive of being a trespasser in this apartment, Adela shall go down with you into the drawing-room, and give you a little music, or at least find entertainment for you till the hour arrives at which you would take leave, if Mr. Somerville and Alicia were at home."

She then shook hands with him, and he followed Adela down stairs.

"I am extremely glad," said she, declining the seat which he would have placed for her at the instrument, "that this opportunity is afforded me of speaking to you without fear of interruption. Elinor knows that I have particularly wished to question you in private, ever since your return from Scotland. The information I drew from you some time ago, has by no means satisfied me. I want to hear much more about my poor mother than merely that she is well. Discard all mystery then, my dear cousin, and tell me, plainly and unre-

servedly, every thing that you know relating to her."

Talbot had nothing pleasant to add to the information which he had already given her, and wished exceedingly to escape the necessity of furnishing her with further intelligence.

"Are you not," said he, "a little unreasonable in your expectations?—What additional accounts can you hope to obtain from one who was only indulged by Lady Rosalvan with a five minutes audience, and even during that short time could not speak to her except in the presence of a third person?"

"I am prepared," said Adela, alarmed at his evasive manner, "for something painful. Your looks and guarded language, assure me that you know more than you are willing to wound my feelings by disclosing. But dismiss these friendly, perhaps, but now, suspicious precautions, and confess to me the simple and unvarnished truth."

Thus urged, young Cleveland gathered more courage—

"Your mother, my dear cousin," cried

he, "has, I fear, delivered herself up to evil and to selfish counsellors, and when I reached Pine Lodge, was on the point of putting the seal to her own future misery!"

Adela turned pale, and sat down; but without withdrawing her eyes from his face, she awaited in silent dismay a fuller explanation.

Talbot, with evident reluctance thus went on—

"Her house has long been beset, and her ear exclusively engrossed by a confederacy of the vilest parasites—the most designing, and I suspect, necessitous hangers-on. The principal of these, a Mrs. Cameron, raised from indigence and vulgarity, by a marriage of which she was every way unworthy, to a station of comparative respectability, has a brother, a complete adventurer, who, after trying a variety of means, none very creditable, to shake off poverty and insignificance, at last had recourse to the double occupation, or rather drudgery, of an author, and a strolling player. This man, though no longer young, is reported, for I have not seen him, to possess considerable advantages of face and person—in short,

aided by the machinations of his treacherous sister, what will you say, my dearest Adela, when I tell you that he has won your mother's regard—and obtained her hand?"

Adela, profoundly grieved, but scarcely experiencing a moment's surprise, sorrowfully cast up her eyes and said—

"I feared as much!"

"Had you, then, ever heard of his existence before?"

"I heard of it," answered she, "with the most fearful anticipations, whilst I was still at Pine Lodge, and was long tormented with vague conjectures of his sister's purpose, after I came to town. A letter, which I ought to have received much sooner, but which only reached me a short time before your return, gave me but too great reason to fear that my mother would surrender herself an unresisting prey to the avarice of these worthless schemers. The letter to which I allude, was written by my mother's maid; who, after detailing to me the machinations carrying on by Mrs. Cameron, exhorted me, in the strongest manner, to endeavour to counteract them, by addressing, without delay, the most earnest re-

monstrance in my power, to her deluded lady."—

"And did you?" enquired Talbot.—

"Yes, but with all proper deference—and with very little hope, if any, of producing conviction."

"As affairs have now turned out," resumed Talbot, "I am heartily sorry that you ever wrote at all. I heard, but without giving credit to the assertion, or being able to comprehend upon what grounds it rested, that Norris, poor Lady Rosalvan's successful suitor, had declared himself your irreconcileable enemy. There can now be very little doubt that your mother shewed him your letter; and thence the resentment he so insolently avows!"—

"I can only hope," said Adela, "that an enmity against which I am so happily protected, will not recoil upon his melancholy dupe. What conduct does he observe towards her, and what are the prospects she retains for her future life?"

"I have little to state," cried young Cleveland, "on either of these points, that will give you any comfort. This rash marriage has connected Lady Rosalvan with a

whole group of harpies, unfeeling, unprincipled, and systematically bent upon bereaving her of every shadow of independence. Mrs. Cameron, and her mother-in-law, have taken up their permanent abode at Pine Lodge, and suffer its, now, merely nominal mistress, to admit the approach of no human being till after they have ascertained the object of the visit. The five thousand pounds which it is well known that she has to bequeath at her decease, and the present advantages which they derive from the participation of her allotted income, seem to be the chief motives of this suspicious vigilance. But another reason for it, doubtless is, the shameless insolence of their own conduct to their devoted victim. They have dismissed all her favourite domestics, and substituted others entirely new, and more subservient to their interest. It cannot be said that they riot on her spoils, since such is their industry to accumulate by immediate savings every thing which they can for an uncertain hereafter, that they have fawned or frowned her into an immediate resolution of parting with her horses and carriage—of shutting up all the

best part of the house—and of living, when Norris is absent, with a parsimony so sordid, that it nearly excludes the commonest comforts of life. The person from whom I received all this distressing information, is the poor discarded Mrs. Temple. On hearing that my name was Cleveland, she sought me out at the miserable little inn, where, in hopes of obtaining a second and more satisfactory interview with Lady Rosalvan, I prevailed upon myself to remain during two days. Her heart was full, and it seemed a relief to her to find some one willing to listen to her just regrets, and to hear her heavy catalogue of unmerited injuries."—

"Alas! poor Mrs. Temple!" interrupted Adela, sincerely grieved for her, "after a faithful servitude of nearly twenty years, she was, indeed, entitled to a better recompense!"

"She is now," resumed Talbot, "turned adrift, with no other remuneration than the bare payment of her wages, and no better prospect than that, advanced as she already is in years, of resuming a life of dependence in some other family. Indignant as she is, however, she had the justice to acknowledge

that of all the wretches who now surround your infatuated mother, Norris, undeserving as he is, seems the least grasping and the least detestable. He has not, hitherto, treated Lady Rosalvan with open contumely, nor aggravated to her by his own arrogance the tyranny of his female associates. But he is seldom at home, and the dissolute companions whom he introduces into the house whenever he enters it, shock your mother as much as his long and frequent journeys surprise and alarm her. Such, my dear cousin, is the painful history which I brought from Scotland, and had determined to keep lodged within my own breast. You have now drawn it from me—but to what other purpose than to afflict your own heart?"

"And what right have I," said Adela, weeping at this gloomy picture of her mother's fate, "to expect that affliction will for ever spare me?—I think not of myself, however, at the present moment. Tenfold is the sorrow that I would endure to contribute to the emancipation of the unhappy Lady Rosalvan from her hopeless and degrading bondage!"

At this moment the drawing-room door

flew open, and the voice of Mr. Somerville was heard, saying—

"Go in there till I come down to you."

Adela and her companion turned their heads, and in the person thus ushered in, beheld Lord Ennerdale.

It would be difficult to decide which individual present looked at that moment the least gratified at sight of the other.

Lord Ennerdale casting towards Talbot, a glance compounded of anger, astonishment, and the deepest mortification, remained fixed upon one spot near the open door, too indignant to speak—too much confounded to move. Adela, hastily drying her tears, attempted to rise, but agitated, and half terrified at the Earl's unwonted hostility of countenance, her limbs trembled under her, and pale as marble, she was forced to keep her seat.

Talbot alone preserved any tolerable composure. Yet, offended by the haughty air with which he had been regarded; convinced that in Lord Ennerdale he beheld a jealous lover, and no less inclined to hate him in that character, than to envy the supposed influence which he possessed, Tal-

bot eyed him with reciprocal resentment, and deigned not to utter a syllable, or to stir from his place.

At length the Earl, with lips that quivered as he spoke, and cheeks that glowed with ill-suppressed emotion, addressing himself to Adela, said—

"I beg your pardon for this intrusion—Mr. Somerville led me hither—he knew not that you were engaged."

And then, slightly bowing, he precipitately retreated—flew down the stairs, and was out of the house in an instant.

Adela, on hearing the street door close after him, threw herself back in her chair, and covering her face with her handkerchief, gave to the dejected Talbot every reason to suspect, that she was again, and with increased bitterness, shedding tears.

Mr. Somerville now came eagerly running down from his wife's apartment.

At sight of young Cleveland alone with Adela, he started—

"Where," cried he, "is Ennerdale?"

"Gone," laconically answered Talbot.

"Gone?—and wherefore did he go?"

"Perhaps, to cool himself by a walk!"—

"Why, what has been the matter?—What has passed?—Tell me, Talbot, and tell me how it chances, that you and Adela should be shut up here talking by yourselves at such an odd time in the evening?"

"You must give me leave to say, Mr. Somerville, that you have stated your question in very extraordinary terms!" cried Talbot, with some heat.

"I have stated it very intelligibly, at least, Mr. Cleveland! And it would be a great satisfaction to me if you would condescend to let your answer be equally explicit!"

"Must I then apologize for a conference of your wife's proposing? Must I remind you, that as Adela's near relation, it is possible I may have had occasion to speak to her upon family affairs, which she might be unwilling to discuss before any third person?"

The petulant, but candid Somerville, now smoothed his brow, and resuming his accustomed good-humour, answered—

"I believe I have been copying too closely the example of our testy friend Julius!—But, my dear Talbot, you must forgive me, and remember, that when a man is conscious

he has done a foolish thing, it is some consolation to him to quarrel with the first person, friend or foe, whom he finds in his way. I had no business to send Ennerdale in here so abruptly, and I am heartily sorry also, to have been betrayed into any thing like intemperance of language to you, who are one of the last individuals whom, either on your own account, or my wife's, I would wish to offend."

A concession not half so ample would have sufficed to appease Talbot, who, though not inaccessible to moody passions, was easy to conciliate, and ever more disposed to forgive the faults of others than his own. He now frankly shook Mr. Somerville by the hand, at the same time, bidding him good night. And then, whispering to the still motionless Adela, an affectionate "Heaven bless you!" he quitted the room, and immediately after, the house.

As soon as he was gone, Mr. Somerville took possession of the chair which he had just vacated, and would have entered with his sister-in-law into an explanatory conversation: but slowly raising her head, Adela, half impatiently, half in sorrow, answered—

"Do not talk to me, my dear Mr. Somerville, to-night; I am sick at heart—sick of myself, of the world, and all that it contains!"

She arose as she pronounced these words, and leaving Mr. Somerville utterly confounded at her singular language and manner, retired to her room.

CHAP. XIV.

VICISSITUDE.

LORD ENNERDALE, devoured with jealousy, disappointment, and the keenest regret, had quitted the house of Mr. Somerville in a state of mind too cruelly disturbed, to venture immediately on a re-appearance amidst the gay throng at Lady Isabella's. He paraded a considerable time through the adjacent streets, his thoughts all in tumult, his resolutions all unfixed—

"Why was she thus privately conferring with Talbot at a time when indisposition was made the plea for her not appearing at my sister's? Why was she weeping? Why was she so evidently confused by my un-

expected entrance ?—Has he then really touched her heart? And must I thus submit to lose her? No—by all that I most prize under heaven, I will not so passively renounce her!—An undeserved, an unworthy suspicion of her purpose to encourage Harley has influenced me to stand aloof too long. I seem now to be suffering the just penalty of my infatuated silence! To-morrow shall rescue me from a state of such intolerable suspense. I will enter into open competition with this dreaded Cleveland; I will tell her how unspeakably dear she is to my heart, and how utterly incapable I feel of resigning her patiently to a rival. Adela is too noble-minded to waver in her choice from any worldly motive;—she will deal with me honourably and frankly;—when assured of the passion which she has inspired, she will at once confess, that she has no heart left to bestow—or she will smile encouragement upon my happiest hopes!"

Thus determining to rest his cause on the issue of the next day's avowal, he gradually became calmer; the throbbings of his agitated bosom subsided, and, retracing his

steps to Mr. Annesley's, he again entered the ball-room with looks nearly as unruffled as the most unimpassioned man present.

To the incautious rattle of Mrs. Erington the untoward events of the night were to be attributed. Instantly on her entrance at Lady Isabella's, accompanied only by Mr. Somerville, she had been accosted by Lord Ennerdale for the purpose of enquiring after her sister. The long interval which had elapsed since he and Adela had met, gave double fervency to his wish of seeing her that night. He had almost forgotten the painful surprise which her visit at Sir Patrick's had occasioned him; he had almost forgiven her abrupt desertion the day that Talbot met them upon the road; he thought of nothing but the joy of again beholding, and the delight of again conversing with her.

To his eager interrogations, Mrs. Erington carelessly, and almost laughingly, answered—

"Oh, she has got a head-ache and a cold, and I am commissioned to make speeches for her to Lady Isabella."

"If we may judge by your countenance,"

said the disappointed Ennerdale, "she is no very severe sufferer from either of these causes!"

"Now, pray don't watch my countenance when I merely repeat what other people bid me say. Remember that I am only answerable for what I assert of myself."

Turning to Mr. Somerville, Lord Ennerdale now gravely said—

"Can you at all conjecture what induced your sister, if not really ill, thus severely to disappoint us?"

Mr. Somerville was beginning a warm protestation of his entire ignorance upon the subject, when he was interrupted by the approach of Mr. Annesley—

"What have you done with the fair Adela?" cried he—

"Call her likewise the faithless Adela!" cried his brother-in-law—"she means to defraud us of her presence."

"Is not she then coming at all?"

Mrs. Erington shook her head and shrugged—

"But what is her pretext? What excuse does she send?"

"She pleads a cold and a head-ache."

"Neither of which you believe to be real?"

Mrs. Erington smiled, and again most significantly shrugged—" This being the case," resumed Mr. Annesley, " I insist upon it, Somerville, that you go back to her with our protest against so inhuman a caprice. Here comes Lady Isabella, who, I am sure, will second the resolution."

Her ladyship, on hearing the affair stated, readily voted for Mr. Somerville's instant departure on his embassy.

" Oh, she won't come, you may rest perfectly assured !" cried Mrs. Erington—" If all my teasing had no effect, I defy Mr. Somerville's eloquence to shake her stubborn purpose. However, he may try.—And *should* you succeed," added she, turning to her brother, " tell her, that when she arrives, I will go down and bring her into the ball-room."

Mr. Annesley now whispered to Lord Ennerdale—

" Somerville sets out on this diplomatic negociation, totally unprovided with credentials; why do you not go with him, to vouch for the power to treat with which we have invested him?"

Lord Ennerdale coloured, hesitated a moment, and then, darting off, overtook Mr. Somerville on the stairs—

"If you think," cried he, "that your sister will see me, I should like to accompany you, and hear from her own lips the reasons she gives for breaking her engagement."

"She will see you," said Mr. Somerville, "there can be no doubt; but that she will favour you with any better reasons than she has already assigned to us, I will not with equal readiness, pretend to promise."

On the arrival of the two gentlemen at Mr. Somerville's door, some of the men-servants were standing upon the steps, talking with a group of domestics belonging to the adjoining house. They made way for their master and his friend, who thus gained admittance without the necessity of knocking.

Believing that Adela was, as usual, in his wife's apartment, Mr. Somerville ushered Lord Ennerdale into the drawing-room in the hasty manner which has been related, and then proceeded to seek and bring her down.

But what pain, what disturbance had this

introduction occasioned to the artless, but apparently designing Adela! She had declined a gay and tempting engagement, even with effort to her own feelings, from respect to what she was told would be her father's wishes; she had exchanged for this exhilarating scene an afflicting conference on family affairs; she had risked offending the Annesleys, had provoked her brother-in-law, and called forth the censure of both her sisters—and all to what purpose?

"To none," cried she, "to which I can ever reflect upon without the keenest regret. What conclusion can be drawn from my being surprised in a conversation so strangely-timed and so earnest with Talbot, but this—that our interview was pre-concerted, and that, on a false plea of indisposition, I gave up the ball wholly on his account?"

These reflections, and the melancholy impression left upon her mind by the tale which she had heard of her unhappy mother, deprived her of refreshing sleep during the night, and sent her in the morning, with harassed feelings, and eyes that betrayed the unsoundness of her rest, to the breakfast table of her sister.

The moment Mrs. Somerville beheld her—

"My dearest Adela," cried she, affectionately extending her hand, "what is the matter? Is the disquiet, the sadness, I might almost say, that is visible in your countenance, the effect of your last night's conference with our cousin?"

"Not entirely, dear Elinor; some personal chagrin mingles with the deep concern excited by his representation of my poor mother's comfortless state. I will explain to you my meaning; but let me entreat, that what I have to say may never be mentioned before Alicia,—and, as all remonstrance would now be useless, forbear likewise to enter into any discussion of the subject with Mr. Somerville."

She then, abridging and qualifying the recital as much as was consistent with veracity, communicated to Mrs. Somerville her mother's ill-advised and most ill-boding marriage;—and, afterwards, spoke feelingly, but without asperity, of the awkward introduction of Lord Ennerdale into the drawing-room, in the midst of her confidential dialogue with young Cleveland.

"I participate, most sincerely," cried

Mrs. Somerville, when she had heard her to an end, "in the concern this affair must give you: perhaps, dear Adela, I even regret it more deeply than yourself."

The entrance of Mr. Somerville at that moment, withheld his wife from pursuing the conversation.

"My good little sister," cried he, "what sort of cue are you in this morning? You played off such strange heroics last night, that I knew not what to make of you! Are you come down from these altitudes? And will you listen to, and answer a plain English question?"

"Yes," said Adela, "if I like its matter and its manner!"

"I am glad to see that saucy smile,—you now look like yourself again. Well, then—will you condescend to tell me, why you drove poor Ennerdale away in such a furious hurry, and why you were breaking your heart so deplorably in company with Talbot Cleveland?"

"Lord Ennerdale drove *himself* away; nothing was said, nothing was done to make him depart with so much speed. But, in

my turn, pray allow me to ask, what motive induced him to come?"

"Your mad sister betrayed to him that your illness was all a mere feint, and he accompanied me hither with a slight hope of prevailing upon you to retract your resolution of staying at home."

"He cannot complain that I was inexorable to his pleadings — for the fact is, he never pleaded at all!"

"Why, what could he think of the dolorous state in which he found you, and of the sort of mystery that seemed attached to the conversation in which you were engaged? I hardly knew what I was to believe myself."

"Believe simply this, my dear brother, —that Talbot was announcing to me some very distressing tidings, which, though I am fully disposed to confide to you, I must entreat that you will let me refer you to Elinor to explain some other time. I have told the story once this morning, and it grieves me too much, to be very willing to repeat it."

Mr. Somerville, much concerned, now affectionately said—

"You should know of grief nothing but

the name, my dear Adela, if I could influence your fate. I cannot reconcile myself to the appearance of the slightest dejection upon your kind and open brow! But come, let us talk of other things: there will be hours enough in the course of the day, to hear from Elinor the unwelcome particulars which you teach me to expect."

Mrs. Somerville then desired him to give them some account of the ball:

"You must apply to Alicia for all that," answered he, "I am the worst hand in the world at detailing such matters."

"But tell us—did Lord Ennerdale dance?"

"Dance! He would have had his eyes torn out if he had refused! That unconscionable old woman, Mrs. Rivers, was there, with her insipid daughter, and she almost raised a riot, and called in the aid of one or two termagants, as confident as herself, to oblige him to stand up with the girl. The whole scene disgusted and enraged me: and the more so, from observing, that many of Lady Isabella's *soi-disant* friends enjoyed it. The Rivers' are highly allied, and there seems a sort of confederacy formed, to dispose of poor Louisa to the best advantage."

"How devoutly thankful ought I to be," mentally cried Adela, "that I was not there, to be exposed (by the very man who so severely censures these proceedings in others) to similar observations from those who saw him pursuing similar measures!"

She now solicited his escort into the Park, and taking Lady Harriet Mordington with her, they sat out on one of their accustomed rambles.

Adela had frequently observed, during these morning peregrinations, which she and Mr. Somerville sometimes extended as far as Kensington Gardens, a lady, much muffled up, but apparently young, walking slowly with a gentleman whose ghastly paleness and evident debility, in addition to the loss of his left arm, struck every beholder with compassion. Mr. Somerville judged him, though he could hardly explain on what foundation, to belong to the army.

As she drew near the spot where this melancholy pair had usually attracted her attention—"I wonder," said Adela, "whether we shall meet our poor sick friend today. I call him our friend, because, though we know not who he is, it is impossible not

to feel interested by his suffering appearance."

"I see nothing of him, however, this morning," cried Mr. Somerville. "Poor fellow! I should not wonder if he was, at last, unable to leave his bed. He has looked more and more reduced every time we have beheld him."

"I am afraid too," resumed Adela, "that he is poor! In sickness or in age, even I, who affect so much to disdain the fear of poverty, acknowledge it to be the severest of misfortunes."

"Poverty, in the strict sense of the word," said Mr. Somerville, "is no chimerical grievance under *any* circumstances. I mean not such poverty as our inconsiderate Alicia often complains of; a poverty that merely compels her to repress fantastic wishes, and to withstand extravagant temptations: but I mean, the fear or the reality of wanting bread, fuel, covering, and a home! Such indigence, or its remotest probability, is dreadful, and ought to shame all who dare repine at imaginary privations."

They proceeded, still engaged in serious discourse upon the probable circumstances

of the anonymous invalid, till insensibly they had reached one of the nearest entrances into Kensington Gardens.

"Let us go in a few minutes," said Adela, "as well to give Lady Harriet an opportunity of sitting down to rest herself, as to ascertain whether the sick stranger has been able to get so far."

Somerville had no will but hers, and they entered the garden.

It was yet early, and scarcely a solitary straggler appeared in view—

"I delight in this place when it is thus quiet and untenanted," said Adela; "there is something in its rich verdure, in the sudden contrast of its shade and silence to the glare and hurry without,—in its extent, its freshness, and tranquillity, that reposes at once both the eyes and the mind."

"If my days of courtship were to come over again," said Mr. Somerville, laughing, "I think I would bring Elinor hither to hear me breathe my vows. When you are in love, Adela, you must lead your swain to saunter with you beneath these shades."

Adela thanked him for the timely counsel, and was leading Lady Harriet towards a

bench, when in one of the alcove seats, not far distant, she descried two figures resembling the sick officer and his female friend:—

"There, I believe, are our poor incognitos," said she; "take one turn past them, my dear brother, and bring me word whether my conjecture is right."

Somerville obeyed her; but returning hastily after a momentary glance—

"Adela," cried he, "have you any salts? The poor young man, I believe, has fainted."

Adela flew to the spot, and beheld indeed the stranger for whom she felt so much concern, leaning in a senseless and almost dying state, upon the shoulder of the lady who so constantly attended him—

"Ah, madam," cried the sympathizing girl, "this is a pitiable sight!—What assistance can we afford you? We have no carriage here to convey you home; but this gentleman could perhaps meet with some servant at the palace willing to procure you one. Shall he try?"

The lady wept too much to speak, but bowed her thanks, and Mr. Somerville instantly darted off.

Adela had observed near the gate, a poor man who sold fruit and whey, and she now determined to apply to him for the loan of a glass to bring the stranger a little water—

"Will you," said she to the lady, "permit this child," pointing to the young Harriet, "to remain a moment under your protection?"

Then hastening towards the gate, she had, breathless and panting, almost reached it, when she was suddenly encountered by Lady Ennerdale.—

"Miss Cleveland!" exclaimed she, greatly surprised—"Are you here alone, ma'am?"

"Oh no, no!—But I go for some relief—a glass of water,—any thing I can obtain, for a poor man who is ill in one of these alcoves."

"You should not leave the gardens unprotected!"

"I shall be perfectly safe.—Who would molest me at such an hour, and in so public a spot?"

She resumed her expeditious course whilst thus speaking, and Lady Ennerdale, scarcely knowing whether most to admire her rea-

dy humanity, or to disapprove a spirit which she deemed too adventurous, felt herself in some measure called upon to follow, and preserve her from any interruption.

Adela, meanwhile, had reached the fruiterer's humble stand, and fully effected her purpose. She rejoined Lady Ennerdale, bearing a glass of water in her hand, and anxious to hasten forward with it to the alcove; but her ladyship, addressing to her some enquiries about the invalid, she was obliged to accommodate her pace to the measured step of a companion whom, at that moment, she so little desired.

"Who is the person," said the Countess, "for whom you are giving yourself this trouble?"

"I neither know his name, nor have had any distinct view of his face," answered Adela; and then, relating briefly the simple matter of fact, she ended by expressing an earnest hope that Mr. Somerville would be successful in his endeavours to procure for the feeble stranger some immediate conveyance home.

Lady Ennerdale paused for a moment, and then said—

"I have a carriage near the gate, which your *protége* and his companion are welcome to make what use of they please; and, perhaps, you and Mr. Somerville will permit me, when you walk back to town, to accompany you.—I shall a little retard the rapidity of your progress; but that is the only inconvenience you will experience from admitting me to be of your party."

Adela looked and spoke her thanks for this considerate offer with great animation: and the Countess relaxing more and more from her accustomed stateliness, now said—

"You long, most probably, at this very moment, to take wing again, and to outstrip my tardy movements. Give me the water, and whilst I carry it safely to the alcove, run forward, if you wish it, to announce my proposal."

Adela, hastily, but with real gratitude, saying—

"How very kind and good your ladyship is!" flew down the walk with the lightness of a fawn.

The young man, breathing short, and still unable to support himself, was, however, beginning to recover his perception—

"I bring you happy news," cried Adela, addressing his companion.—"A lady is approaching who offers you the use of her carriage home."

"Ah, madam," cried the female stranger, "how can we ever sufficiently thank you for the interest which you condescend to take in our distress?"

"You owe *me* no thanks, most certainly. I have been wholly powerless to serve you: but here is one, able and willing to be of real use to you."

Lady Ennerdale now joined them, and Adela took from her the water, and handed it to the invalid. It appeared to refresh him, and he sipped it with evident pleasure.—Whilst thus engaged, his hat no longer shading his wan face, and his eyes being occasionally raised to look at his active new acquaintance, an indeterminate idea rushed into Adela's mind, that she knew him. Her colour rose, and she was debating within herself whether to address him immediately by his name, or to wait till he made it manifest that he had no wish for concealment; when Lady Ennerdale, who had herself been

regarding them with great commiseration, said—

"Is all this debility the remains of a fever?"

"No, madam," answered the young and lovely female sitting beside him; "it is the consequence of what he suffered in the hands of an unskilful surgeon."

And she directed a shuddering look towards the vacant sleeve of his coat—

"Is he in the army?"

"Yes, madam; and he is but lately returned from abroad."

"I hope that he *now* has good professional assistance, and many friends, who, though not more assiduous, are more experienced attendants than yourself."

The young woman silently cast down her eyes, and the cheeks of her suffering companion were tinged with a faint blush.

Adela would now have given the world to be alone with them.—Every sentence that had been uttered, and every glance which she directed towards the wounded officer, convinced her, that she beheld in him, pale, emaciated, and half-dying as he

appeared, her early companion, and the darling of his respectable family, William Hampden!—How changed since last she had seen him! How desolate now seemed his situation, as well as shattered his constitution, and annihilated all his brilliant visions of military distinction!—Who his beautiful but helpless associate could be, and what were his reasons for holding himself so completely aloof from all his natural connections, she wished no less to learn than she was incapable of conjecturing. He appeared, from the conscious and almost stolen looks he sometimes cast towards her, to have recollected her with no less certainty than he was recognized himself; but he either wanted strength to speak, or from some private motive, was disinclined to enter into any explanation in the presence of Lady Ennerdale. Adela had too much delicacy to force him to a reluctant acknowledgment: yet it was painful to her to persevere in treating him as a stranger, and still more painful, to forbear expressing the sincere and deep affliction with which she beheld the melancholy result of his martial enthusiasm.

CHAP. XV.

JUSTIFICATION.

Mr. Somerville now returned, followed by a man who seemed to be an under-gardener, and who had proffered his services to get the invalid a coach at the Kensington gate; and, if necessary, to assist in supporting him to it. Adela went forward to meet them, and related to her brother-in-law her fortunate encounter with Lady Ennerdale, and the loan which she had proposed of her own carriage. The gardener was then dismissed with thanks, and some more solid token of obligation; and Mr. Somerville accompanied her back to the alcove.

Youg Hampden, still weak and tremulous, seemed to require an interval of yet longer tranquillity, ere he could safely venture to quit his present resting-place. Lady Ennerdale desired that he would not hurry himself; and then, telling Adela, that she would seize the moment to enjoy a part, at least, of her accustomed ramble, she asked her, half-smiling, and with some little hesi-

tation, whether she was too much fatigued to do her the honour of accompanying her—

"Oh, no," said Adela, "I am accustomed to take much longer walks than this in the country."—

Leaving Lady Harriet, therefore, to the care of Mr. Somerville, who chose to remain with the strangers, she set forward, with her gradually civilizing companion.—

"I never had the pleasure," said the Countess, "of meeting you here before: it is almost my daily haunt. I am sometimes joined by my nephew Ennerdale, and half expect him this morning."—

Adela's thoughts instantly reverted to the scene of the preceding evening, and she heard this information with much disquiet, and an expression of countenance that denoted a total change in the tone of her spirits.

"Why," said her observant companion, after a short silence, "were you not at my daughter's ball last night?"

"I sent an excuse to Lady Isabella," said Adela, "which, if it had been properly delivered, would fully have accounted for my absence."—

"It was delivered by one to whom you must never entrust a questionable apology again. She made sceptics of us all."

"I really had a cold," resumed Adela; "and if it has almost vanished this morning, may I not ascribe its speedy cure, to the prudence of having forborne, whilst it lasted, to enter a hot and crowded ball-room?"

"Perhaps so; prudence on these occasions, is so rare amongst young ladies, that it certainly merits an almost miraculous reward!—But I was afraid that some little resentment had instigated you to deprive Isabella of your company."

"Resentment!" repeated Adela, "against whom, madam, could you suppose that I harboured any?"

Before the Dowager had time to answer this interrogation, raising her eyes, she beheld Lord Ennerdale, just dismounted from his horse, entering the garden.

"We must postpone," cried she, "all further conversation upon this subject. Here comes my nephew. But I am happy to find, Miss Cleveland, that for past offences, you have so short a memory."

Adela scarcely heard this last sentence. Though most anxious that Lord Ennerdale should be informed of the residence in town, and disastrous circumstances of his former playfellow and friend, William Hampden, she could ill endure the idea of seeing him again with the frigid and displeased aspect he had worn the night before. She felt that it was impossible to clear herself from the imputation of having capriciously slighted Lady Isabella, unless she betrayed the conference which had passed on the subject of her ladyship's invitation, between herself and Julius; neither could she account for having been found in tears with Talbot, unless she published the unfortunate history of Lady Rosalvan. These were both such avowals as it would have been the height of indiscretion to make; and no means therefore seemed left to her of reinstating herself in Lord Ennerdale's good graces.

Reluctant to advance, shy of looking up, full of consciousness, and almost dreading the first accent of his voice, what was her surprise, her grateful gladness, when, as he drew near, she heard him, in a tone of the liveliest pleasure, exclaim—

"How charmed I am at this unexpected meeting! My dear Lady Ennerdale," added he, drawing her arm within his own, "how long have you been here? And how did you and Miss Cleveland thus contrive to find each other out?"

"Accident, at first, contrived it all," answered the old Lady: "but design on my part, has prolonged the interview beyond the measure, perhaps, of Miss Cleveland's patience."

She then detailed the manner of her meeting with Adela, and gave some account of the wounded officer.

"And are you," said Lord Ennerdale, addressing Adela, "wholly unacquainted with the person for whom you so benevolently exerted yourself?"

"I sincerely wish," she sorrowfully answered, "that I could, in truth, say, I am."—

He looked at her with much surprise, and earnestly cried—

"Do I also know him?—Who is he?"

"Oh, Lord Ennerdale, he is one whom you loved as a brother;—who, when you last saw him, was full of health, spirits, and

hope! He is now, dejected, maimed, and, for what reason I find it impossible to guess, abandoned, in sickness, and in suffering, by every natural friend!"

Lord Ennerdale looked heart-struck by this description—

"Ah, poor William!" cried he, "I fear the melancholy picture you have drawn, applies to him!"

"It does, indeed."

"And is he still in the garden?"

"Yes,—in yonder alcove."

"I will go to him this moment. I owe every thing to his father, and in saying that I have the affection of a brother for William, you do me, dear Miss Cleveland, no more than the strictest justice."

Then turning to Lady Ennerdale, he added—

"I am solicitous that my first interview with him should be without witnesses. Remain here then, my dear madam, with Miss Cleveland, and she will tell you more circumstantially what the relations between us have been, and whence originates the lively interest which both she and I take in this young soldier's fate."

Whilst he was still speaking, Mr. Somerville came up, to say, that the stranger now felt himself perfectly equal to walking to the carriage, and seemed anxious to depart without further delay. Adela took hold of his arm to prevent his going back to the alcove, and the Earl hastened forward in the direction which she had pointed out to him.

A few words sufficed to give Lady Ennerdale all the information which was necessary to recall to her remembrance the early connection of her nephew with Dr. Hampden and his deserving family: and she readily acknowledged, that to the son of such a friend, every service and every consolation in the Earl's power to bestow, was justly and undoubtedly due.

Lady Harriet had again placed herself under Adela's care, and the whole party continued patiently seated near the gate, till the re-appearance of Lord Ennerdale. He was slowly walking arm in arm with young Hampden, and accompanied by that young man's fair, and now, smiling associate.

Adela, encouraged by a look from the

Earl, arose and stepped forward alone to meet them, and poor William, disengaging himself from his friend's support, frankly stretched forth his hand to her, saying with an air of ingenuous self-reproach—

"I have been a most ungracious—I fear, you think, ungrateful object of your benevolence! But pardon me, dear Miss Cleveland,—dear Adela, let me call you — and make all the allowance in your power, for the froward humours of a mind as diseased as the body which it now only half animates."

Adela gave him her hand with tears glistening in her eyes, and pressed his with all the cordiality of a sister: but her heart was too full for speech; and Lord Ennerdale, observing her emotion, tried to draw her attention towards William's companion—

"This lady," said he, "has claims upon your kindness, which, when you know that she is the wife of our friend, and his most tender nurse, you will, I am sure, not be slow to admit."

Adela was prepared for intelligence of this nature. Yet, when she looked at the

lovely and delicate creature introduced to her in so responsible a character — married, at scarcely more than seventeen, to a desponding, sick, and indigent ensign, the pity which she felt for her was even painfully oppressive, and she could only transfer to her in silent concern the hand that she had before held out to William. The devoted young woman received it with an aspect of gratitude, unmixed, however, with any symptom of self-compassion; and presently after, they all moved forward.

"Hampden declines at present," said Lord Ennerdale, "the proposal which I am most anxious he should accept, of an apartment in my house: but he promises in a few days, to become my inmate—and then, in a few weeks, I hope to tell you, that I have so ably assisted Mrs. Hampden, that we have nursed him into perfect health."

William mournfully shook his head, but made no answer; and Adela, seeing him thus heartless and despairing, thought of his adoring mother—of his kind and respectable father — and to hide the tears which

again rushed into her eyes, was forced to turn away her face.

On joining Lady Ennerdale, after young Hampden and his beautiful partner had been introduced to her, they all accompanied them to the carriage, which had no sooner driven off with its new occupiers, than the dowager, who appeared to be as stout a walker as the youngest person present, took possession of the Earl's arm, and led the way towards town.

At Cumberland Gate, Mr. Somerville and Adela bade her good morning; she parted from them with great civility; and her son-in-law continued faithful in his attendance upon her, till she reached her own door.

She was silent a few minutes after the separation had taken place, and then, in an accent of unusual kindness, said—

"My dear Algernon, I think it will give you pleasure to hear, that the conduct, this morning, of your young friend Miss Cleveland, has made her appear, even to my prejudiced eye, in a very amiable point of view."

"It certainly *does* give me great pleasure," answered he; "but no surprise."

"Nor does it," resumed her ladyship, smiling, "surprise *me* much, to find you so ready to credit the irresistible power of her attractive qualities!—But will you forgive me, if I speak of her with perfect unreserve?—I have strong suspicions that you love her; and though I acknowledge the little right I have for interference, and foresee the little prospect I have of being listened to with conviction, yet hear me, at least, with patience, and with a firm persuasion, that I now am influenced against this young lady—personally considered—by no bitterness of disapprobation."

"This opening," said Lord Ennerdale, "could you be aware of the recent subject of my meditations, you would acknowledge, is well calculated to alarm me. But I will be completely undisguised with you, dear madam. Nothing *can* alarm me, at present, that does not proceed from Adela's own lips. I *do* love her; and it is my irrevocable purpose to make proposals to her! Of their event, I am wholly uncertain: but should it be propitious, I hope to obtain from you, very shortly, a favourable reception for her as my wife. Spare, spare me

then, dear Lady Ennerdale, all unavailing representations. I know the worst that you can say; I know that Adela has a mother, who, by some, may be considered as reflecting disgrace upon her daughter. But shall *I* think thus? Shall I forget, that whatever may be the principles of that mother, she has been in no danger of contamination from them, by ever having lived with her? Shall I forget, that her childhood, her youth, nearly her whole life, has been spent under the care of beings the most primitively simple, and exemplarily moral? Do I not also know, that Lady Rosalvan herself (were vice hereditary) is less vicious than weak? Her irritability of temper, and shallowness of understanding, far more than her perversity of nature, led her to ruin. Does her daughter inherit these imperfections of judgment and of temper? No, most assuredly; she is, on the contrary, peculiarly distinguished for the excellence of both. Then why should she be supposed capable of transgressions into which nothing but the want of those advantages precipitated her mother?"

"This," said the Countess, "may be a

good defence of Miss Cleveland individually, and a reasonable ground of belief, that she will, in her own person, maintain a pure and blameless reputation. But will it satisfy —will it even occur to the public mind?"

" Dear madam," cried the Earl, "in transactions relating to domestic life, it is not so much the public mind which a man has to satisfy, as, first of all, his *own*, and next, the mind of his family, and of his intimate associates. Now, with respect to myself, the arguments which you have heard me adduce, have fully and permanently set my feelings at rest; and since they are such as even your ladyship allows, give reasonable assurance of Adela's undeviating uprightness, why should I fear the less scrupulous judgment of any other individual amongst my connexions?

" I remember the time," my dear Ennerdale, resumed the Countess, "when the sentiments you held respecting these stains upon family honour were widely different! —Soon after you were placed at Eton, the two young Harbournes were sent there.— Have you forgotten the force and feeling with which you spoke of the discredit which

you thought the guilt of their parents had attached to their name?"

"I have a very imperfect recollection of the circumstance, or of the petulant comments which, as an inexperienced boy, it might draw from me. This only I clearly remember:—that the misconduct there, was flagrant on *both* sides. The father, who was in some official situation, had incurred infamy by notorious peculation, and was forced to fly his country to avoid a public trial; and the mother was too shameless to be tolerated — almost too vile to be mentioned. Of the two boys who were sent to Eton, I hope I never spoke with contempt, since I have often thought of them with concern and pity. The eldest was old enough to know, and most poignantly to feel, the degraded situation of his family. He looked broken-spirited; he held aloof from all intimacy with his fellow-students; nothing could rouse him to animation or to mirth; and there was a sort of indignant dejection in his countenance, so striking and so singular, that the scholars who took any interest in his fate (and I certainly was one), used to say, that rather than

be weighed down by such early and oppressive melancholy, they should pray for death. But, dearest madam, does this story bear any affinity to that of Adela?"

The Countess could not but admit, that the facts differed widely: yet it was perfectly evident, that however unwilling she might be to quarrel with the Earl; however softened she might feel by the morning's adventure, in favour of her he so steadily defended, her internal averseness from the match continued nearly as potent as ever. But arrived now within sight of her own door, she compelled herself to forbear all further animadversions; conversed for a few minutes on general and indifferent subjects, and then suffered her young escort to take his leave.

CHAP. XV.

INTERRUPTION.

WEARY as she was, Adela, on reaching home, had hastened immediately with a detail of the occurrences in Kensington Gar-

dens, to the apartment of her sister, and remained with her till obliged to dress for dinner. No guests being expected, her toilet was plain and expeditious, and descending to the drawing-room the first of the family, she there, very unexpectedly, beheld Lord Ennerdale.

"I fear," cried he, "that you will think I unmercifully haunt you!—After so recently parting from you, are you not out of all patience thus speedily to find me in your path again?"

Adela assured him, that she was rejoiced to be furnished with so early an opportunity of talking over the affairs of their friend William Hampden.

"Have you," added she, "seen him since his return to town?"

"Yes; I have spent two hours at his lodgings."

"And has he given you any explanation of his desolate situation with which you are at liberty to entrust me?"

"How delighted I am to find you so willing to become my auditress! I invited myself here to-day, for the sole purpose of asking you to let me play the orator on this,

and many other subjects, which I am most impatient to discuss with you. Your readiness to hear me, will, I hope, render me eloquent—and my own solicitude not to be heard in vain, will, I hope also, gift me with persuasion.—Are you going out this evening?"

"Not till ten o'clock—and between that hour and the present, I think, my Lord, you may find full leisure to give your eloquence the fairest trial."

"But I must condition that you will not hear me in a jesting mood! "*Good gentle one, let me sustain no scorn;—I would be loath to cast away my speech.*"

"If your speech is of poor William, there is no fear of my listening to you with too little seriousness!"

"How much better I can bear to hear these expressions of kindness for him, than I can endure to witness the distinctions which you confer upon some other of your friends!"

Adela was assured, that he alluded to her late interview with Talbot Cleveland, and felt herself change colour. However, with

all the steadiness in her power, she answered—

"The distinctions, as you call them, which I may have been seen conferring upon one friend, I would quite as readily confer upon another, since they have never originated from feelings of exclusive regard, but have been as impartial, as I wish them to be thought undesigning."

"Indeed! then you would not refuse to *any* humble suppliant—myself, for instance, —the same boon which you have granted to former petitioners?"

"I must know the sort of boon you mean!"

"You are afraid of committing yourself by too positive an answer! Do you guess, that the object of my application, is a short audience after dinner in Mr. Somerville's study?"

Adela, thrown off her guard by a request so little anticipated, was half ready to exclaim, "wherefore?—to what purpose?"—But checking herself, though the sudden glow in her cheeks visibly denoted much greater agitation than she wished to betray:

"I cannot," she hesitatingly answered, "promise—I cannot be quite certain of having a minute to spare; my sister Erington will expect me to be preparing for our engagement."

Lord Ennerdale beheld the flutter into which his solicitation had thrown her, with sentiments of alternate delight and apprehension; and now gaily said—

"Your sister Erington caused so much mischief last night, that the least she can do, this evening, is to abstain from the prevention of some good. And, believe me, it will be a great good, to throw no impediment in the way of the conference for which I am interceding.—I have much to say to you—it has been my fixed determination, from the instant I quitted this house yesterday evening, to visit it again as speedily as possible—to lay open to you my heart—and to search, as deeply as you would suffer me, into your's!"

This speech, which was begun with a laugh, ended with an air and in a voice so serious, that Adela, again colouring,—perplexed—confused, knew not which way to

look, and had seldom felt more thankful than when relieved by the entrance of Mrs. Erington.

"Oh, how enchanted I am," cried the fair widow, "to find that the convent gates are once more thrown open to admit male visitors!—I really began to think that the interdict would last for ever!"

"And pray," said Lord Ennerdale, "have the regulations of your monastery been very austere? Were you condemnèd to a silence as rigorous as that observed by the monks of La Trappe? Were you enjoined severe discipline, strict abstinence, perpetual vigils—and the exclusion of even brothers, or—*cousins?*"—

His arch eye glanced towards Adela as he pronounced the last word, and unable to endure its significance, she turned away, and walked to the window.

"I assure you," resumed Mrs. Erington, unconscious of his full meaning, "that except Talbot Cleveland, who is of no more consequence to Adela or me than Somerville himself, it is now three weeks, three days, and odd hours, since any male visage has presented itself before us! A

few have peeped in at the street door, and the grim Cerberus to whom its guardianship is entrusted, admitted a few into his master's study: but up-stairs, no soul has presumed to march, till you, my Lord, ventured to come, and dissolve the spell. There's poor dear Sir Patrick Harley, Adela! Upon my word, if I did not do all in my power to keep up your interest with him, there is some danger that this long absence would entirely dislodge you from his heart. But I talk to him for you—I listen to him for you, (when he has any thing to say!)—I smile upon him for you—and, last night, I even danced with him for you."

"And some day or other," said Adela, smiling, "perhaps, you may marry him for me!"

Mrs. Erington was unprepared for this answer: it somewhat disconcerted, and, for a moment, made her blush; yet, affecting perfect ease—

"My dear child," cried she, "in the momentous concern of marrying, and giving away in marriage, it is only sovereign princes who are allowed to shackle themselves by proxy. If you can produce au-

thority to justify such a proceeding in private life, and are too lazy to go to church with him yourself, I will put on a bridal habit, and appear there for you, any morning you please."

"I leave the determination of time and place entirely to you and Sir Patrick," resumed Adela; "whoever is kind enough to become my representative in the business, must be at the trouble of arranging every preliminary, without molesting me with the slightest consultation."

Lord Ennerdale, much amused by this little dialogue, gave to it no interruption, but rejoiced to witness the calm and complete indifference with which Adela bore so direct an attack on the subject of her wealthy admirer.

During dinner, his spirits alternately varying from grave to gay, according to the direction which his thoughts pursued, exposed him, from the sprightly Alicia, to considerable raillery, and some very embarrassing interrogations. Adela, to escape any similar remarks, compelled herself to keep up with Mr. Somerville an almost incessant conversation on whatever subject

first occurred to her mind. Throughout the whole meal, her eyes rested not for a single moment on the face of Lord Ennerdale, or were even raised, except by an effort, from her plate. The conference to which she was invited never absented itself from her thoughts. She wondered upon what pretext he would, in the presence of her sister and Mr. Somerville, call upon her to fulfil her tacit promise. She anticipated, with the sincerest uneasiness, the unconquerable embarrassment which she was assured of feeling;—And, more than once, she formed the secret determination of flying to her own room the instant they rose from table, and there to remain till all danger of such a summons was at an end. But had Lord Ennerdale merited to be thus girlishly trifled with? Could she ever account to him for a slight which, to hear him even ask the motive of, would fill her with redoubled confusion?—She was provided with no satisfactory answer to these self-interrogations; and, with whatever disquiet, finally resolved to observe the engagement into which she was understood to have entered.

Mrs. Erington sat longer than was her

custom after dinner, though encouraged to stay neither by the animation of her companions, nor the success of her own sallies. The conclusion of the meal was cheerful to no one present; the Earl became so absent, he scarcely heard a word she said, and almost feared to unclose his lips, lest his first sentence should be—"For pity's sake, terminate this tedious repast!"

Mr. Somerville, wearied by a long ride, in addition to his walk with Adela, was sleepy and languid; and Adela herself, as the moment drew nearer for the interview to which she looked forward, grew more and more disturbed, and not only lost all courage to speak, but all inclination to make the effort.

At length, the fair matron arose, and at the same instant, with greater alacrity than it was perhaps polite to shew, Lord Ennerdale sprung from his chair to open for her the dining-parlour door—

"You are wonderfully alert, my Lord," she laughingly observed, "in facilitating our means of retreat."

"Do not say so," cried he; "you will almost tempt me to forsake yon slumberer,"

looking towards Mr. Somerville, "and follow you to the drawing-room with my vindication. But that would be treachery to my friend William Hampden: I have a message from him to deliver to you, Miss Cleveland, which I am anxious to communicate before you write to any of his friends. Will you, for that purpose, allow me five minutes private conversation?"

He waited for no answer, he gave her no time to deliberate, but snatching up one of the candles, he took her hand, and ere she knew whither he was leading her, she found herself alone with him in Mr. Somerville's study.

Her hand trembled within his, and her colour varied from pale to red with such rapidity, that, feeling for her confusion, he resolved, by making William, at the opening of the conference, the real object of whom he should speak, to give her time to recover greater tranquillity.

"I have ventured to promise for you," cried he, relinquishing her hand after he was seated, "that you will very soon pay poor Hampden a visit, and hear from his own lips the reasons he assigns for keeping

his parents in ignorance of his present abode. They are plausible, but not convincing; and, I trust, you will have sufficient influence, to induce him to give them up. *I* exhorted him to do so in vain."

Relieved by this beginning, and half persuaded, that the affairs of young Hampden were designed to be the sole topics of their discourse, Adela, ashamed of her previous trepidation, now said, with comparative calmness,

"May I not be put out of suspense this evening, by learning these reasons from you?"

"Why, no;" replied he, after some hesitation; "I have concerns of still nearer interest, respecting which I am too impatient to be put out of suspense myself, to afford the time necessary for a full discussion, at the present moment, of the particulars which you require. I can only recommend to you, not to be too hasty in writing to William's family. This was all I pledged myself with him to undertake, and all that I am now disposed to perform for him. I must not lose the opportunity which I have been so earnest to obtain, of becoming a suppliant to you in my own behalf."

All Adela's emotion recurred at these words; nor was Lord Ennerdale himself, as the tone of his voice sufficiently indicated, exempt from participating in her agitation. He paused a moment; stole a glance at her downcast face—and then added—

"I see, by the almost painful confusion which oppresses you, that you anticipate the import of what I have to say:—but anticipate it, sweetest Adela, with less affright! Remember, that even from your infancy you have known me as a *friend*, and endeavour now to think of me without consternation as a *lover*. I have long been seeking by every means (short of speech) to prepare you for this declaration, and to make you acquainted with the state of my heart. Ill indeed must my looks have corresponded with my feelings, if they have wholly failed to indicate to you, how dear, how precious to that heart you are become! Tell me, with the ingenuousness that marked your earliest years,—tell me, have you remained absolutely unconscious of your influence? And are you now utterly insensible to its avowal?"

He had taken her hand during this speech,

and, at its conclusion, attentively regarding her, awaited her answer with the most anxious suspense. She tried to articulate some intelligible sentence: but long accustomed to repress her real sentiments in his presence —half incredulous of possessing the power which he attributed to her—fluttered, grateful, and happy beyond the possibility of expressing what she felt, she could only pronounce a few incoherent words, amongst which the name of her father was all that the Earl could clearly distinguish. With renewed energy, he again addressed her—

"I fear not your father!" cried he, half-smiling—"It is your father's lovely daughter I would propitiate.—It is her coldness I would conquer—her reserve I would banish! —Oh, my most dear Adela! if yet your heart is disengaged—if yet it is your own to give,—bestow it on that Algernon Mordington who so long has known and felt all its value!—Is there no softening power in that name?—Was it not once familiar to your ear—pronounced with kindness by your lips —lodged with affection in your bosom?—Does it not recall to you our days of mutual confidence—of open and avowed attachment?

—Beloved Adela, let these days again recur!—Whose disposition are you so well qualified to estimate impartially as mine? You know me, when, though solicitous for your regard, I had no interest in seeking to obtain it by false pretences. You saw me daily, with all my imperfections on my head!—You hourly associated with me when, whatever the character becomes afterwards, it is incapable of systematic dissimulation. At that happy, and regretted period, you loved me, dearest Adela,—you scrupled not even to tell me so! Ah, then,—unless you believe me wholly changed, wholly degenerated, refuse not to admit me to your heart again!—Let me read my sentence in your looks!—let me, through their medium, obtain assurance, that you fear not to entrust your happiness to my keeping!—It shall be dearer to me than my own existence—held more precious than any other earthly deposit!"

As Adela, penetrated by the tenderness of this language, raised her eyes to answer its animated speaker, a hasty knock at the room-door startled them both, and the next moment, Mrs. Erington putting her head

within it, held forth a sealed note towards her sister, saying—

"I beg pardon for interrupting your confab, good folks—but here is a *billet-doux*, Adela, from my aunt Cleveland, or one of the girls, and the servant has orders to wait for an answer."

It would have been a satisfaction past expression to Lord Ennerdale, to have dispatched at once this ill-timed *billet-doux*, and the lady who brought it, into the wilds of Siberia! He bit his lips—almost murmured an imprecation, and stepping reluctantly forward, conveyed the note from the hand of Mrs. Erington to that of Adela.

"May I come in whilst you read it?" inquired the fair intruder—"I am curious to know what it can be about."

Again Lord Ennerdale most devoutly wished her ten thousand miles off; whilst Adela, faintly complying with her request for admission, broke open the note, and read, half aloud, as follows—

"My dear Adela,

"We were all going to-night to Lady "Wilbrooke's great concert: but mamma, "for some reason or other (I believe, a little

"conjugal *fracas*), chuse to do penance, "and remain at home. Barbara and I have "no ambition to imitate the example; and "as we know, that you and Mrs. Erington "purpose to be there, we beg you will al- "low us to join your party.

"Pray send a line to say whether this "arrangement is practicable, and whether "we may come to you early enough to "spend half an hour with Mrs. Somerville "before we set out.

"Your's ever, my dear Adela, very truly,

"JEMIMA CLEVELAND."

The answer to this request was obliged to be affirmative, and when Adela had written and dispatched it, Mrs. Erington said—

"Do you know, my dear little sister, that it is almost nine o'clock, and full time for you to begin dressing. Pray put off the remainder of your private communications with this discontented-looking gentleman, till to-morrow."

Aware how unwelcome to Lord Ennerdale must be such an exhortation, Adela was internally much chagrined at being compelled to comply with it. He was, himself, too seriously provoked to dare hazard

any expostulation: but silently suffering her to be led away, he rejoined Mr. Somerville.

Adela well knew, that from the flightiness of Mrs. Erington, there was every reason to apprehend the publication of this conference in the presence of Jemima. Without a suspicion of its real purport, the fair widow was yet extremely disposed to be witty upon its mysterious appearance; and, as thoughtless of mischief as she was unconcerned to effect good, she rallied Adela unmercifully upon her young counsellor's legal abilities; wondered what they were plotting, and supplicated, whether it was treason or not, to be admitted as early as possible into their confidence. All this convinced Adela that the interview would be made the principal subject of conversation the whole evening;—yet, to caution Mrs. Erington, without exciting suspicions of the truth, was impracticable. With whatever uneasiness and distrust therefore, she was compelled to let the business take its own course.

The arrival of Jemima and her sister, and the exertion which she felt called upon to

make in order to receive them with civility and apparent satisfaction, drove from her remembrance, for a time, the alarm she had experienced; and even to Jemima, the most penetrating of observers, there appeared nothing in her aspect or manners differing materially from their accustomed ease.

Fortunately, Mrs. Erington was diverted from the subject which Adela so much dreaded to hear her start, by eagerness to describe Lady Isabella Annesley's ball, and by industry to excite envy in her auditors of the gaiety and amusement which she declared herself to have enjoyed at it.

Attended by Mr. Somerville, the four kinswomen at length drove to Lady Wilbrooke's. On their entrance into the concert-room, they found it already so crowded, that it was manifestly impossible, not merely to procure seats, but even to gain space in which unmolestedly to stand. Adela soon grew dissatisfied with her post near the door; it subjected her to great observation; to continual interruption whilst listening to the music, and to the disagreeable necessity of being nearly surrounded by men whom she either knew very slightly, or was wholly

unacquainted with. Mrs. Erington, on the contrary, and the two Clevelands submitted to their situation with perfect unconcern,—and declined making any effort to change it.

At the conclusion of an exquisite performance upon the harp, scarcely three notes of which Adela had been able distinctly to hear, she begged Mr. Somerville would assist her in trying to reach an inner room, where she hoped at once to procure a chair, and to suffer less disturbance. He immediately gave her his arm, and they moved slowly forward.

Scarcely had they proceeded half a dozen steps, when Talbot Cleveland perceived, and joined them. Adela had no wish to meet him; yet, candidly allowing that he was wholly unanswerable for the pain which she had endured since, and at their last interview, she forced herself to address him without any diminution of kindness, and, on finding Mr. Somerville was likely to be detained by some gentlemen who had approached to speak with him, she accepted Talbot's offer of continuing her progress under his escort.

The throng being by no means so great

in the interior of the room as it was near the door, she soon succeeded in reaching the inner apartment, and in securing a quiet and convenient seat. Talbot remained with her, though she repeatedly urged him to go and inform his sisters and Mrs. Erington what excellent accommodations she had found. At length, however, the accents of a female singer of great celebrity, whom he extremely admired, attracted him again into the music-room; and he promised, as soon as the song was over, to convey the message with which he was entrusted to the three ladies.

Adela, meanwhile, beholding around her none but faces of the gravest and most matronly decorum, maintained her station without the smallest scruple, satisfied that in joining so respectable a circle, though unaccompanied by any one whom she knew, she had at least chosen a situation of the most perfect propriety.

When the air was over, which Talbot had quitted her to go and hear, an elderly lady, complaining bitterly of the pressure and heat in the concert-room, made her way into the comparatively cool asylum to which

Adela had retreated, and fanning herself violently, seated herself upon the same sofa, and entered into conversation with a sedate and somewhat stately dame who occupied its further end. Previous to the arrival of this indefatigable fanner, the lady already accommodated, had appeared half asleep; and, in reality, was, without much interest in any thing that was passing, patiently waiting for a summons to return home with two fashionable daughters, then flirting in the adjoining apartment.

"My dear Lady Berindale," said the bustling new comer, "you can't imagine how thankful I am to have succeeded at last in getting out of the suffocating atmosphere of that dreadful music-room! I really thought I should have died whilst I was forced to remain in it! How prodigiously unwholesome such a concourse must be! I always disliked these crowded assemblies, but since my asthma has been so bad, I have really contracted quite a horror of them. Nothing upon earth should have induced me to come, but the wish of hearing the new singer, and the impossibility I am under of going to the Opera for that purpose. I have

given up all public places for nearly two years: but really, this is quite as bad, and during the whole song, I was so hemmed in, so jostled, so stifled for want of air, that I every moment expected to sink down in a fainting fit!"

"Whereabouts did you sit," in a strong Caledonian accent enquired her friend?—"Could you not procure a chair near the staircase door?"

"Near the door, my dear madam! Why that would have been the very worst place I could have chosen! The throng there, is indescribable, and the buz and confusion beyond any thing that you can imagine. By this time, I dare say, the landing-place and the stairs are quite choked up, and many persons will probably go away without having been in the concert-room at all. But what surprises me the most, is the voluntary *choice* which many ladies make of the door-way for their permanent station. They really must be hustled and elbowed from side to side, till they are quite black and blue. There is a beautiful young creature standing there at this very minute, whom I should seriously have pitied, had I not heard her

absolutely *refuse* a seat which a gentleman was sent across the room by Lady Isabella Annesley to offer her. I asked who she was, for her face and figure struck me wonderfully; and I was told that her name is Erington."

The grave north-countrywoman, who, when she heard of a "beautiful young creature" in the thickest of the crowd, expected no less than to find that it was one of her own daughters, now, rendered somewhat peevish by the disappointment, cried out—

"And don't you know who Mrs. Erington was?"

"Not in the least:—pray, is there any history belonging to her?"

"She is one of the daughters of that Mrs. Cleveland, who, you may remember, some years ago, was so celebrated for her beauty, her gay parties, her taste, and high fashion."

"Bless me! is she indeed? Well, and what is become of Mrs. Cleveland? I have quite forgotten how all her celebrity ended: but it, somehow, runs in my head that her splendour set, at last, behind a dark cloud."

"Dark indeed! She eloped with Sir

Frederick Rosalvan, was divorced, and for many years, has assumed her paramour's name. Whether she really was ever married to him, has often been questioned: but as there is no family, it matters little; especially as she now, poor infatuated creature, has formed another connection. Sir Frederic is dead; and his widow, as she styles herself, has bestowed her hand, and the whole amount of the property which he left her, upon a low-born adventurer—a man who once lived in actual servitude beneath my roof! He was valet to my eldest son, and dismissed for impertinence, and frequent intoxication."

This dialogue, far from being uttered in a suppressed voice, was spoken as audibly as if the two ladies had been conversing in a private dressing-room. Adela lost not a single sentence of it; and every word struck her to the heart, and filled her with shame and sorrow. Pale and disconsolate, she hung her head, and absorbed by deep, but painful attention, she marked no object around her, nor had even courage for an instant to raise her eyes.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the astonished

auditress of a tale in many respects but too authentic, "this is a sad history. But where does the poor woman live now?"

"In Scotland, and at no great distance from Lord Berindale's estate. However, I never had a thought of visiting her, even in the life-time of Sir Frederic, for it seems to me peculiarly incumbent upon the mother of grown-up daughters, scrupulously to avoid all intercourse with these kind of dubious characters—these women of only half-retrieved reputation. Sir Frederic was upon friendly terms with my lord, and frequently came to our house: but there the intimacy rested. Last winter, I was surprised to find, that Mr. Cleveland permitted his youngest daughter, and the only one who remains single, to spend several months with this unhappy woman. It was an imprudent thing, and served no other purpose than that of introducing the young person to improper associates, and of reviving the suspicion of her own illegitimacy. I know, that when the divorce took place, a strong disbelief prevailed of her legal claim to the name of Cleveland; and it is apparent, by her having constantly been excluded from the roof

of her nominal father, that his own doubts subsist as powerfully as ever.

"Oh Heaven!" thought Adela, "and is all this asserted and believed of her on whom the generous Algernon has bestowed his heart!—How little am I entitled to such a distinction! How unworthy should I be, were I to take advantage of an affection so highly valued, but, alas! so undeservedly conferred!"

Unable to endure the humiliation of listening longer to a dialogue so wounding to her feelings, she arose in great disturbance, and, with tears trembling in her eyes, had advanced a few steps towards the outward room, when the hasty approach of Lord Ennerdale, who had been observing her from the door, arrested her progress, and aggravated all her distress.

"You look ill," cried he, with great anxiety—"you can scarcely stand!—Return to your seat, and let me bring you a glass of water."

He would then have conducted her back to the place she had just quitted: but though determined to conceal from him no part of what she had heard, she shrunk

from the idea of doing it in such a spot—and still more she shrunk from the danger of being revealed to Lady Berindale as the Miss Cleveland of whom she had been with such indiscretion conversing.—Hastily rejecting his assistance, she earnestly exclaimed—

"Oh, no, no—I cannot go back to that seat—I cannot, at least, suffer you to lead me to it! Pray leave me—I am not ill—I am better—pray leave me!"

She scarcely knew what she said. Her dread of his persisting in desiring to conduct her whither she, with so much justice, apprehended to go, was irrepressible. She forced herself onwards, and when she reached the door-way, stopped, and leant against its side, in a tremor that shook her whole frame.

Lord Ennerdale, meanwhile, amazed and grieved at the unqualified repulse which he had received—and not merely perplexed, but in some degree offended by it, spoke to her no more: but involuntarily observing every change in her countenance, and becoming more and more apprehensive for her, he suddenly darted through the group

which surrounded the door, and, in a few minutes, Mr. Somerville, alarmed and hurried, was at her side.

"Ennerdale says that you are ill, my dear Adela," cried he, "and your looks confirm the intelligence. What is the matter? Has the heat overpowered you? Lean on me, and I will take you to an open window."

Adela accepted his arm, but declined any further assistance from him, saying—

"All I want, and the only thing that will make me quite well, is to get away from this house—at least from this room, as speedily as possible."

"Alicia will never be induced," said Mr. Somerville, "to go away so early. Here, however, she comes, to settle the matter in her own proper person."

Adela hastened forward, anxious to preserve her sister from being subjected to the observation of Lady Berindale and her friend.

"Why you poor little vapourish thing," cried Mrs. Erington, "what in the world has happened to you? Lord Ennerdale came to me with a report of your illness

that quite scared me! But I see not that any thing ails you, beyond a little preponderance of the lily over the rose. What has frightened you, child? Have you seen a ghost? Or heard a warning voice bidding you beware the Ides of March?"

"I have seen nothing that does not make me solicitous to get home. Will you let Mr. Somerville enquire for the carriage?"

"There is not the smallest chance of its being arrived: but, however, if it will give you any satisfaction to have the enquiry made, pray don't be scrupulous on my account.—Send your beau to collect all the information for you he can."

Mr. Somerville was then hastening away, but tapping him lightly upon the shoulder as he passed her, Mrs. Erington added—

"Not so fast, good brother. Let it be fully understood before you go, that even if you *should* find this same carriage, it will not directly be in my power to accompany Adela home, unless our fair cousins are as well disposed to make their exit as I am."

"That is true," cried the rational Adela; "I will therefore make a merit of necessity,

and remain here as contentedly as I can, till you are all ready to go."

"This is being a good girl!" cried Mrs. Erington, "and a reasonable girl, and an accommodating girl!—So now, come with me, and I will lead you to a snug seat beside Lady Isabella Annesley; and when every body is willing to depart, you shall have notice."

This scheme perfectly according with Adela's wishes, she thankfully agreed to it, and exchanging Mr. Somerville's arm for that of her sister, they proceeded together towards the spot occupied by Lady Isabella—

"How do you think I shall be received, Alicia?" enquired Adela, as they advanced. —"Do you imagine, that Lady Isabella will resent my breach of engagement last night?"

"Why, no;—you have two or three warm friends in her family, who probably have told her, that it is not pretty to bear malice; and she always acts, and speaks, and, I believe, *feels*, just as she sees those act, speak, and feel who are about her. She is a mere reflector of the light and heat

given by others: but, to her dying day, she will never give any of her own."

Had she been gifted with the very spirit of divination, the fair Alicia could not have formed a more accurate judgment. Lady Isabella greeted Adela with the most gracious gentleness. She expressed her concern to hear that she had been indisposed; resigned to her the chair in which she had been sitting, because it was placed near a window, which, at pleasure, could be opened; and would listen to no apologies for what had passed the preceding evening; assuring her, that it would have given her far more pain than pleasure to have withdrawn her from home, at a moment when, either her spirits or her health, disinclined her to go out.

This encouraging kindness, Adela attributed solely to the good offices of Lord Ennerdale. Some part of it, however, was to be ascribed to the relenting disposition with which her ladyship had heard her spoken of that day, at dinner, by the old Countess; and the rest was the work of Mr. Annesley, ever indefatigable in seeking to repair the shock which he had once given to her fa-

vourable opinion of the lady to whom his friend Ennerdale was so devotedly attached.

Soothed, however, by a reception so flattering, and confiding in the security of the tranquil station which she had at length attained, Adela had leisure to reflect upon, and deeply to regret, the abruptness of her treatment of Lord Ennerdale. She knew, that it was to his interference, she was indebted for the approach and offered assistance of Mr. Somerville. She longed to thank him for his attention—to make excuses for having driven him from her—to promise him a full explanation of the feelings by which she had been impelled,—and whilst these secret aspirations were forming in her mind, a voice close behind her, gentle, yet serious, said—

"May I *now*, at least, be permitted to express a hope that you are better?"

"Oh, you are come, I trust," cried she, turning towards the Earl with the promptest alacrity, "to tell me, that you pardon my ungrateful misconduct!—It was such, as scarcely to entitle me ever to be thought of with interest by you again!"

Joy flashed from his eyes, and brightened every feature, as he fervently, yet in almost whispered accents, answered—

"When I cease, adored Adela, to take an interest in all that relates to *you*, I must have ceased to exist!"

"And have I really, upon such easy terms," resumed she, smiling, "made my peace?—I expected that, at least, you would have required me to clear up what had passed: and though I well knew, that *when* cleared up, you would make every allowance for the strangeness of my conduct—yet, I own, I had no hope of so generous a pardon without being asked for any explanation at all!—Are you not a little afraid, that such ready placability may encourage new offences?"

"I am afraid of nothing, but that I have not self-command sufficient, to endure such exquisite kindness of looks and language without betraying the grateful transport they inspire! Speak not to me thus before all these people, lest I should forget their existence, and fall at your feet to thank you!"

Adela coloured, yet laughed at this flight, and said no more; but finding that he had contrived to procure a seat in the recess of

the window, and meant to retain his station near her, she leant back in her chair, and whilst apparently listening to the music, indulged, in total but placid silence, such soothing and complacent meditations, that it seemed as if the mere vicinity of one in whose faith she so implicitly confided, had power to banish every uneasy retrospection, and to suspend every anticipating fear.

" *Etre avec les gens qu'on aime,*" says la Bruyère, " *cela suffit: rêver, leur parler, ne leur parler point, penser à eux, penser à des choses indifférentes, mais auprès d'eux, tout est égal.*"

Feelings exactly corresponding with these, seemed to have taken possession of Lord Ennerdale, for after a considerable period, during which the silence between them was mutual, he leant towards her, and said—

" In the interval which has just elapsed, though I have sometimes regretted that I was not at liberty to speak to you without restraint, I have experienced more serene and perfect happiness than it is in the power of language to express.—Before I secured possession of this enviable post, you had given me a cordial which has kept my heart

in a glow ever since; and every note to which I have listened has appeared sweeter, every object I have regarded has looked fairer, and every prospect of futurity on which my thoughts have rested, has been more brightly tinged with felicity, than at any former period of my life!—I wish you could tell me that these feelings have been reciprocal!"

The lips of Adela were silent, but she turned to him with a smile so expressive, an air of such gentle and entire participation in the sentiments which he had described, that, enchanted, and thrown off his guard, he half snatched her hand—but instantly dropping it, started up, saying in a low voice—

"This corner is not favourable to the preservation of discretion! I must go into temporary banishment, or I shall betray the excess of my happiness to the whole room!"

"Your place, then," said Adela, "will be filled up by a successor to whom I am by no means ambitious that you should surrender it."

She glanced her eyes, whilst speaking, towards Sir Patrick Harley, who, standing

at a little distance, was observing her with his accustomed pertinacity, and had already made sundry efforts to approach nearer, and to obtain a permanent station beside her.

"At such a hazard," resumed the Earl, immediately re-seating himself, "I will not relinquish it an instant! Yet, I know few obvious candidates for the vacancy whom I could with less emotion yield it up to!"

"Would you not," said Adela, archly, "resign it with equal composure to Talbot Cleveland?"

"To him, of all men living, with the least! But my faith in your goodness towards myself is so much stronger to-night than it has hitherto ever been, that, even to Talbot, I could *almost* renounce my post without a pang!"

Adela, now, willing to direct the conversation to subjects less immediately relating to themselves, asked him whether William Hampden's residence was at a considerable distance from Cumberland Place?

"No," replied he, "it is in Dorset Street. You will, I hope, very shortly find a leisure moment to visit him, and to afford relief to the almost total solitude in

which his sweet wife lives immured. I must not here," added he, "talk to you of what concerns my own interests, and therefore I will make use of the opportunity to acquaint you with the heads of poor William's story. Yet, after all, I know not why I should so liberally and constantly apply to him that lamentable epithet! It is true, that he possesses no portion of what the world calls prosperity: he is sick; keenly alive to the apprehension of incurring neglect; distracted at the thought of sinking into insignificance, and torn with self-reproach for pursuing, with regard to his own family, a mode of conduct so culpably clandestine. Still, however, I consider him, in one respect, as an object of envy. He is secure for life of the woman of his choice; their mutual attachment is touching, and, I sincerely believe, likely to be as permanent as it is fervent. His lovely young partner hovers round him, watches his looks, ministers to his wants, and soothes his despondency with an assiduity resulting so entirely from the tenderness of her affection—she thinks herself, but for what she sees him suffer, so happy a being—her temper ap-

pears so amiable, and her hopes of his recovery are so sanguine, that whatever privations, whatever loneliness and monotony of existence she is condemned to endure, her courage never fails, and her love never chills. William, injured in health both of body and mind, poor, maimed, and broken-spirited, is as dear, or yet dearer in her eyes, than if surrounded, in their utmost plenitude, with all that glory, rank, or affluence could bestow.—Is a man thus circumstanced really to be pitied?"

"If he feels the value of her affection as sensibly as you describe it—certainly not."

"He feels it with all the gratitude, all the reciprocal tenderness which it ought to inspire:—yet, is it wholly insufficient to console him for what he calls his blasted prospects, and defeated hopes. He imagines, that the shattered state of his constitution will compel him to resign his commission, and detesting every other profession but that of arms, repines incessantly at the helpless inactivity to which the remainder of his life must be devoted. His thirst for military renown is really extraordinary, and worthy the heroic breast of an ancient cru-

sader. It has rendered him (his youth, and subaltern rank considered) a very able, I believe, and intelligent officer. His room is crowded with books upon tactics—memoirs of great generals — and maps of the different seats of war in every part of the Continent: and these, his young wife told me, are the chief solace of his retirement, the favourite antidote he uses to lull the sense of pain, and cheer the languor of debility."

"But has he no physician?" enquired Adela—"these mental palliatives will do little towards the cure of decided bodily suffering."—

"Either from ill-directed economy," answered Lord Ennerdale, "or from a general distrust and contempt of the medical corps, he has hitherto submitted his case to men of no reputation, and of the most questionable skill.—His arm, hastily amputated immediately after the engagement in which it was shattered, has never been properly attended to since his return home, and is neither healthily nor securely healed. It often gives him the most intolerable anguish,

and he is preyed upon, in consequence, by continual fever. One of my first objects has been to send to him the ablest surgeon in London; and after examining the wound, his report to me (you will be shocked to hear) was, that it must go through some further very severe operation, before it can in any respect be pronounced in a sound way of recovery. This personal calamity, therefore, is the chief thing now to be attended to: after which, some attempt must be made to remedy the wounds of his mind, by endeavouring to effect a reconciliation between the two families (his wife's and his own) which a runaway marriage have offended,—and by using every exertion to get him promoted in his regiment."—

"How providential," cried Adela, deeply interested by this detail, "has been his encounter with so judicious and zealous a friend!—But explain to me, Lord Ennerdale, the particulars of this marriage: when fwas itcontracted? and who is his good and engaging young bride?"

"She is of a rank to render still more respectable the fortitude which, in such a

reverse, she nobly evinces. Her father is a Baronet, driven by infirmities, the loss of an only son, and some degree of singularity, to devote himself to a life of complete sequestration on his hereditary estate. During a visit — the first which she had ever been permitted to pay even to her nearest relations, she saw William Hampden, and for a short period became an inmate of the same house with him. He was at that time in hourly expectation of being summoned to embark with the troops which he accompanied on foreign service: but though his head was filled with visions of martial distinctions, his heart was vacant for the admission of softer sentiments. He surrendered it at discretion to his fair conqueror, and after establishing with her the plan of a regular correspondence, parted from her at the conclusion of little more than a week, most desperately and passionately enamoured!"

"Why, the prompt courtship of Romeo and Juliet," cried Adela, smiling, "scarcely exceeds the haste to woo of this modern pair!"

"Oh, they were not altogether such slow-paced, deliberate people as *you*, I confess, can be expected to approve! — Their scale of affection was not so nicely graduated; but prudence and circumspection never were terms admitted into William's vocabulary; neither, at sixteen, and just emancipated from the strictest seclusion, had they found any avenue to the mind of his ingenuous mistress. — I must not allow them to be laughed at! — Their love, though a little romantic, was sincere and disinterested; as a proof which, behold them now, in all their adversity, still devotedly attached; and though reduced to live upon William's pay, too conscious of the repulse they merit, to entertain any thoughts of applying either to Dr. Hampden for assistance, or to the lady's father for pardon."

"And is it from a motive of such false pride, that William tortures the hearts of all his connections, by keeping them so long in ignorance of his fate? Oh, Lord Ennerdale, wean him from this unnatural infatuation: remonstrate with him on the selfishness of estranging himself from a family to

which he is so dear, for the wrong-headed gratification of being able to say — 'I renounce their love, because I require, yet disdain their aid!'"

"My sweet friend," resumed the Earl, "see him to-morrow, and urge all this to him yourself. From your lips, admonitions so just, and uttered with such generous fervour, must be irresistible! From mine, is there not some reason to apprehend, that he would regard them as officious and indelicate?"

"The probability that he might be guilty of such injustice," cried the candid Adela, "is now so apparent to me, that I am ashamed even to have proposed to you so thankless an office. But tell me, how long has he been returned from abroad, and when was he married?"

"I have not been able to exactly ascertain. I fancy about two months. His general health was less impaired on his first arrival, and his spirit of enterprize infinitely more active than it is at present. How he gained access to the willing partner of his flight, I have had no time to learn; but ere

he had been landed three days, he repaired to the neighbourhood of her father's house —probably bribed to his interest some of the domestics — succeeded in carrying her off, and escaped all pursuit, precisely from the circumstance of having previously escaped all suspicion; for his very existence was unknown to the Baronet till after the discovery (made many hours subsequent to the event) of his daughter's elopement."

"And is she," said Adela, "his only remaining child?"

"I believe she is; but not his only companion. His son's widow resides with him, and superintends his family."

"But though William declines making any attempt to negociate a reconciliation, has not *she* sought to appease her offended father?"

"I understood that she had, but hitherto without avail."

"Oh, let her never renounce the endeavour! I speak with no reference to her mere worldly advantage — the loss of an inheritance is nothing, compared with the loss of a father's blessing and forgiveness!"

"I never," said Lord Ennerdale, touched by the unaffected feeling with which this was uttered, "conversed with any one whose genuine goodness of heart, and unfailing purity of principles might win more proselytes to rectitude than yours!—I should be sorry to have a cause depending on your decision that was not strictly defensible! You would pronounce judgment against me, even were your own interest implicated in the sentence!"

Adela, flattered by this high compliment, looked up with a modest glow, to express her gratitude:—but, in an instant, the glow, and the grateful feelings by which it had been excited, gave place to a paleness almost death-like, and to a crowd of emotions productive of the most overwhelming consternation! Her assiduous neighbour observed the sudden change with equal wonder and alarm, and pursuing the direction which her eyes had taken, he beheld, on the opposite side of the room, yet in full view of the place where they sat, a gentleman, conspicuous for his height, and the dignity of his figure—no longer young, but eminently handsome—who, whilst his dark

and piercing eyes were fixed upon the long unconscious, but now shrinking Adela, seemed to be listening to Jemima Cleveland, who stood beside him, and it was evident, by her occasional glances, was making the Earl and her cousin the objects of her discourse.

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